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ARNOLD AND PATER

by T. S. Eliot

THE PURPOSE of the present paper is to indicate the direction taken by taste and thought from Arnold, through Pater, to the nineties, with, of course, the solitary figure of Newman in the background.

The middle of the eighties, 1885, marked the publication of *Marius the Epicurean*. *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* may certainly be counted a more "influential" work; but *Marius* illustrates another, but related, aspect of Pater's work. His writing of course extended well into the nineties; but I doubt whether anyone would consider the later books and essays of anything like the importance, in social history or in literary history, of the two I have mentioned.

It is necessary first of all to estimate the esthetic and religious views of Arnold: in each of which, to borrow his own phrase against him, there is an element of *literature* and an element of dogma. As Mr. J. M. Robertson has pointed out in his *Modern Humanists Reconsidered*, Arnold had little gift for consistency or for definition. Nor had he the power of connected reasoning at any length: his flights are either short flights or circular flights. Nothing in his prose work, therefore, will stand very close analysis, and we may well feel that the positive content of many words is very small. That Culture and Conduct are the first things, we are told; but what Culture and Conduct are, I feel that I know less well on every reading. Yet Arnold does still hold us, at least with *Culture and Anarchy* and *Friendship's Garland*. To my generation, I am sure, he is a more sympathetic prose writer than Carlyle or Ruskin; yet he holds his position and achieves his effects exactly on the same plane, by the power of his rhetoric and by representing a point of view which is particular though it cannot be wholly defined.

But the revival of interest in Arnold in our time—and I believe he is more admired and read not only than Carlyle and Ruskin, but than Pater—is a very different thing from the influence he exerted in his own time. We go to him for refreshment and for the companionship of a kindred point of view to our own, but not as disciples. And therefore it is the two books I have mentioned that are most readable. Even the *Essays in Criticism*

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cannot be read very often; *Literature and Dogma, God and the Bible,* and *Last Essays on Church and Religion*, have served their turn and can hardly be read through. In these books, he attempts something which must be austerely impersonal; in them reasoning power matters, and it fails him; furthermore, we have now our modern solvers of the same problem Arnold there set himself, and they, or some of them, are more accomplished and ingenious in this sort of rationalizing than Arnold was. Accordingly, and this is my first point, his Culture survives better than his Conduct, because it can better survive vagueness of definition. But both Culture and Conduct were important for his own time, and they were wrong.

But Culture has three aspects, according as we look at it in *Culture and Anarchy*, in *Essays in Criticism*, or in the abstract. It is in the first of these two books that Culture shows to best advantage. And the reason is perfectly clear: Culture there stands out against a background against which it is contrasted, a background of perfectly definite items of ignorance, vulgarity and prejudice. As an invective against the crudities of the industrialism of his time, it is perfect of its kind. Compared with Carlyle, it looks like clear thinking, and is certainly clearer expression; and compared with Arnold, Ruskin often appears long-winded and peevish. Arnold taught English expository and critical prose a restraint and urbanity it needed. And hardly, in this book, do we question the meaning of "culture"; for the good reason that we do not need to. Even when we read that culture "is a study of perfection", we do not at that point raise an eyebrow to admire how much culture appears to have arrogated from religion. For we have shortly before been hearing something about "the will of God", or of a joint firm called "reason and the will of God"; and presently after we are presented with Mr. Bright and Mr. Frederic Harrison as foils to culture; and appearing in this way between the will of God and Mr. Bright, Culture is here sufficiently outlined to be recognizable. *Culture and Anarchy* is on the same side as *Past and Present* or *Unto This Last*. Its ideas are really no clearer—one reason why Arnold, Carlyle and Ruskin were so influential, for precision and completeness of thought do not make for great influence. (Arnold, it is true, gave something else: he produced a kind of illusion of precision and clarity; that is, maintained these qualities as ideals of style.)

Certainly, the prophets of the period just before that of which I am supposed to be writing excelled in denunciation (each in his own way) rather than in construction; and each in his own fashion lays himself open to the charge of tedious querulousness. And an idea, such as that of "culture", is apt to lead to consequences which its author could not have foreseen and probably will not like. Already, in the *Essays*, Culture begins to seem a little more priggish—I do not say "begins" in a chronological sense—and a little more anemic. Where Sir Charles Adderley and Mr. Roebuck appear, there is more life than in the more literary criticism. Arnold is in the end, I believe, at his best in satire and in apologetics for literature, in his defence and enunciation of a needed attitude.

To us, as I have said, Arnold is rather a friend than a leader, or if a leader, only as a stimulus to proceed. He was a champion of "ideas" most of whose ideas we no longer take seriously. His Culture is powerless to aid or to harm. But he is at least a forerunner of what is now called humanism, of which I must here say something, if only to contrast it and compare it with the "Estheticism" of Pater. How far Arnold is responsible for the birth of humanism would be difficult to say; we can at least say that it issues very naturally from his doctrine, that Charles Eliot Norton is largely responsible for its American form, and that therefore Arnold is another likely ancestor. But the resemblances are too patent to be ignored. The difference is that Arnold could father something appar-

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ently quite different—the view of life of Walter Pater. The resemblance is that literature, or Culture, tended with Arnold to usurp the place of religion. From one point of view, Arnold's theory of Art and his theory of Religion fit perfectly, and humanism is merely the more coherent structure. But Arnold's prose writings fall into two parts; those on Culture and those on religion; and for such a man as Pater the books about Christianity could have said—as indeed they do say to satiety—merely that the Christian faith is of course impossible to the man of culture. They are tediously negative. But they are negative in a peculiar fashion: their aim is to affirm that the emotions of Christianity can and must be preserved without the belief. From this proposition two different types of man can extract two different types of conclusion: i. that religion is morals; ii. that religion is art. The effect of Arnold's religious campaign is to divorce religion from thought.

In Arnold himself there was a powerful element of Puritan morality, as in most of his contemporaries however diverse. And the strength of his moral feeling—we might add its blindness also—prevented him from seeing how very odd the fragments might look of the fabric which he knocked about so recklessly. "The power of Christianity has been in the immense emotion which it has excited," he says: not realizing at all that this is a counsel to get all the emotional kick out of Christianity one can, without the bother of believing it, without reading into the future to see *Marius the Epicurean,* and finally *De Profundis.* Furthermore, in his books dealing with Christianity he seems bent upon illustrating in himself the provincialisms which he rebuked in others. "M. de Laveleye," he says in the preface to *God and the Bible,* with as deferential a manner as if he were citing M. Renan himself, "is struck, as any judicious Catholic may well be struck, with the superior freedom, order, stability, and religious earnestness, of the Protestant Nations as compared with the Catholic". He goes on complacently, "their religion has made them what they are". I am not here concerned with the genuine differences between Catholic and Protestant; only with the tone which Arnold adopts in this preface and throughout this book; and which is in no wise more liberal than that of Sir Charles Adderley or Mr. Roebuck or "Mr. Tennyson's great broad-shouldered Englishman". He girds at (apparently) Herbert Spencer for substituting Unknowable for God; quite unaware that his own Eternal-not-ourselves comes to exactly the same thing as the Unknowable. And when we read Arnold's discourses on Religion, we return to scrutinize his Culture with some suspicion.

For Arnold's Culture, at first sight so enlightened, moderate and reasonable, walks so decorously in the company of the will of God, that we may overlook the fact that it tends to develop its own stringent rules and restrictions.

> Certainly, culture will never make us think it an essential of religion whether we have in our Church discipline "a popular authority of elders", as Hooker calls it, or whether we have Episcopal jurisdiction.

Certainly, "culture" in itself can never make us think so, any more than it can make us think that the quantum theory is an essential of physical science: but such people as are interested in this question at all, however cultured they be, hold one or the other opinion pretty strongly; and Arnold is really affirming that to culture all theological and ecclesiastical differences are indifferent. But this is a rather positive dogma for culture to hold. When we take *Culture and Anarchy* on one hand, and *Literature and Dogma,* on the other, our minds are gradually darkened by the suspicion that Arnold's objection to Dissenters is partly that they do hold strongly to that which they believe, and partly that they are not Masters of Arts of Oxford. Arnold, as such a Master of Arts should have had some scruple about the use of words. But

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in the very Preface to the second edition of *Literature and Dogma* he says:

> The *Guardian* proclaims "the miracle of the Incarnation" to be the "fundamental truth" for Christians. How strange that on me should devolve the office of instructing the *Guardian* that the fundamental thing for Christians is not the Incarnation but the imitation of Christ!

While wondering whether Arnold's own "imitation" is even a good piece of mimicry, we notice that he employs *truth* and *thing* as interchangeable: and a very slight knowledge of the field in which he was skirmishing should have told him that a "fundamental truth" in theology and a "fundamental thing" in his own loose jargon have nothing comparable about them. The total effect of Arnold's philosophy is to set up Culture in the place of Religion, and to leave Religion to be laid waste by the anarchy of feeling. And Culture is a term which each man not only may interpret as he pleases, but must interpret as he can. So the gospel of Pater follows naturally upon the prophecy of Arnold.

II

Even before the seventies began Pater seems to have written, though not published, the words,

> The theory, or idea, or system, which requires of us the sacrifice of any part of this experience, in consideration of some interest into which we cannot enter, or some abstract morality we have not identified with ourselves, or what is only conventional, has no real claim upon us.

Although more outspoken in repudiating any other measure for all things than man, Pater is not really uttering anything more subversive than the following words of Arnold:

> Culture, disinterestedly seeking in its aim at perfection to see things as they really are, shows us how worthy and divine a thing is the religious side in man, though it is not the whole of man. But while recognizing the grandeur of the religious side in man, culture yet makes us eschew an inadequate conception of man's totality.

Religion, accordingly, is merely a "side" in (sic) man; a side which so to speak must be kept in its place. But when we go to Arnold to enquire what is "man's totality", that we may ourselves aim at so attractive a consummation, we learn nothing; any more than we learn about the "secret" of Jesus of which he has so much to say.

The degradation of philosophy and religion, skilfully initiated by Arnold, is competently continued by Pater. "The service of philosophy, and of religion and culture as well, to the human spirit," he says in the 1873 conclusion to *The Renaissance*, "is to startle it into a sharp and eager observation." "We shall hardly have time," he says, "to make theories about the things we see and touch." Yet we have to be "curiously testing new opinions"; so it must be—if opinions have anything to do with theories, and unless wholly capricious and unreasoning they must have—that the opinions we test can only be those provided for our enjoyment by an inferior sort of drudges who are incapable of enjoying our own free life, because all their time is spent (and "*we* hardly have time") in making theories. And this again is only a development of the intellectual Epicureanism of Arnold.

Had Pater not had one gift denied to Arnold, his permutation of Arnold's view of life would have little interest. He had a taste for painting and the plastic arts, and particularly for Italian painting, a subject to which Ruskin had introduced the nation. He had a visual imagination; he had come in contact with another generation of French writers than that Arnold knew; the zealous Puritanism of Arnold was in him considerably mitigated, but the zeal for culture was equally virulent. So his peculiar appropriation of religion into culture was from another side: that of emotion, and indeed of sensation; but in making this appropriation he was only doing what Arnold had given license to do.

Marius the Epicurean marks indeed one of

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the phases of the fluctuating relations between religion and culture in England since the Reformation; and for this reason the year 1885 is an important one. Newman, in leaving the Anglican Church, had turned his back upon Oxford. Ruskin, with a genuine sensibility for certain types of art and architecture, succeeded in satisfying his nature by translating everything immediately into terms of morals. The vague religious vaporings of Carlyle, and the sharper, more literate social fury of Ruskin yield before the persuasive sweetness of Arnold, who at least made a statement for a generation. Pater is a new variation.

But we are liable to confusion if we call this new variation the "esthete". Pater was, like the other writers I have just mentioned (except Newman), a moralist. If as the Oxford Dictionary tells us, an esthete is a "professed appreciator of the beautiful", then there are at least two varieties: those whose profession is most vocal, and those whose appreciation is most professional. If we wish to understand painting, or architecture, or poetry, we do not go to Oscar Wilde for help. We have specialists, such as Mr. Berenson, or Mr. Roger Fry. Even in that part of his work which can only be called literary criticism, Pater is always primarily the moralist. In his essay on Wordsworth he says,

> To treat life in the spirit of art, is to make life a thing in which means and ends are identified: to encourage such treatment, the true moral significance of art and poetry.

That was his notion: to find the "true moral significance of art and poetry". Certainly, a writer may be none the less classified as a moralist if the morality he finds is suspect or perverse. We have today a witness in the person of M. André Gide. As always in Pater's imaginary portraits, so frequently in his choice of other writers as the subjects of critical studies, he is inclined to emphasize whatever is morbid or associated with physical malady. His admirable study of Coleridge is charged with this attraction.

> More than Childe Harold [he says of Coleridge], more than Werther, more than René himself, Coleridge, by what he did, what he was, and what he failed to do, represents that inexhaustible discontent, languor, and home-sickness, that endless regret, the chords of which ring all through our modern literature.

Thus again in Pascal he emphasizes the malady, with its consequences upon the thought; but we feel that somehow what is most important about Pascal has been missed. But it is not that he treats philosophers "in the spirit of art", exactly; for when we read him on Leonardo or Giorgione, we feel that there is the same preoccupation, coming between him and the object as it really is. He is, in his own fashion, moralizing upon Leonardo or Giorgione, on Greek art or on modern poetry. His famous dictum—"Of this wisdom, the poetic passion, the desire of beauty, the love of art for art's sake has most; for art comes to you professing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake"—is itself a theory of ethics; it is concerned not with art but with life. The second half of the sentence is of course demonstrably untrue, or else being true of everything else besides art is meaningless; but it is a serious statement of morals. And the disapproval which greeted this first version of the conclusion to *The Renaissance* is implicitly a just recognition of that fact. "Art for art's sake" is the offspring of Arnold's Culture: and we can hardly venture to say that it is even a perversion of Arnold's doctrine, considering how very vague and ambiguous that doctrine is.

When religion is in a flourishing state, when the whole mind of society is moderately healthy and in order, there is an easy and natural association between religion and art. Only when religion has been partly retired and confined, when an Arnold can sternly

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remind us that Culture is wider than religion, do we get "religious art" and in due course "esthetic religion". Pater undoubtedly had from childhood a religious bent, naturally to all that was liturgical and ceremonious. Certainly this is a real and important part of religion; and Pater cannot thereby be accused of insincerity and "estheticism". His attitude must be considered both in relation to his own mental powers and to his moment of time. There were other men like him, but without his gift of style, and such men were among his friends. In the pages of Thomas Wright, Pater, more than most of his devout friends, appears a little absurd. His High Churchmanship is undoubtedly very different from that of Newman, Pusey and the Tractarians, who, passionate about dogmatic essentials, were singularly indifferent to the sensuous expressions of orthodoxy. It was also dissimilar to that of the priest working in a slum parish. He was "naturally Christian"—but within very narrow limitations: the rest of him was the cultivated Oxford don and disciple of Arnold, for whom religion was just a matter of feeling, and metaphysics not much more. Being incapable of sustained reasoning, he could not take philosophy or theology seriously; just as being primarily a moralist, he was incapable of seeing any work of art simply as it is.

Marius the Epicurean represents the point of English history at which the repudiation of revealed religion by men of culture and intellectual leadership coincides with a renewed interest in the visual arts. It is Pater's most arduous attempt at a work of literature; for *Plato and Platonism* can be almost dissolved into a series of essays. *Marius* itself is incoherent; its form is a number of fresh starts; its content is a hodge-podge of the learning of the classical don, the impressions of the sensitive holiday visitor to Italy, and a prolonged flirtation with the liturgy. Even A. C. Benson, who makes as much of the book as anyone can, observes in a passage of excellent criticism:

> But the weakness of the case is, that instead of emphasizing the power of sympathy, the Christian conception of Love, which differentiates Christianity from all other religious systems, Marius is after all converted, or brought near to the threshold of the faith, more by its sensuous appeal, its liturgical solemnities; the element, that is to say, which Christianity has in common with all religions, and which is essentially human in character. And more than that, even the very peace which Marius discerns in Christianity is the old philosophical peace over again.

This is sound criticism. But—a point with which Mr. Benson was not there concerned—it is surely a merit, on the part of Pater, and one which deserves recognition, to have clarified the issues. Matthew Arnold's religion is the more confused, because he conceals, under the smoke of strong and irrational moral prejudice, just the same, or no better, Stoicism and Cyrenaicism of the amateur classical scholar. Arnold Hellenizes and Hebraicizes by turns; it is something to Pater's credit to have Hellenized purely.

Of the essence of the Christian Faith, as Mr. Benson frankly admits, Pater knew almost nothing. One might say also that his intellect was not powerful enough to grasp—I mean, even to grasp as firmly as many classical scholars whose names will never be so renowned as that of Pater—the essence of Platonism or Aristotelianism, or Neo-Platonism. He therefore, or his Marius, moves quite unconcerned with the intellectual activity which was then amalgamating Greek metaphysics with the tradition of Christ; just as he is equally unconcerned with the realities of Roman life as we catch a glimpse of them in Petronius, or even in such a book as Dill's on the reign of Marcus Aurelius. Marius merely *drifts* towards the Christian Church, if he can be said to have any motion at all; nor does he or his author seem to have any realization of the chasm to be leapt between the meditations of Aurelius and the Gospel. To the end, Marius remains only a half-awakened soul. Even at his death, in the

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midst of the ceremonies of which he is given the benefit, his author reflects, "often had he fancied of old that not to die on a dark or rainy day might itself have a little alleviating grace or favour about it", recalling to our minds the "springing of violets from the grave" in the Conclusion to *The Renaissance*, and the death of Flavian.

I have spoken of the book as of some importance. I do not mean that its importance is due to any influence it may have exerted. I do not believe that Pater, in this book, has influenced a single first-rate mind of a later generation. His view of art, as expressed in *The Renaissance*, impressed itself upon a number of writers in the nineties, and propagated a confusion between life and art which is not wholly irresponsible for some untidy lives. The theory (if it can be called a theory) of "art for art's sake" is still valid in so far as it can be taken as an exhortation to the artist to stick to his job; it never was and never can be valid for the spectator, reader or auditor. How far *Marius the Epicurean* may have assisted a few "conversions" in the following decade I do not know: I only feel sure that with the direct current of religious development it has had nothing to do at all. So far as that current—or one important current—is concerned, *Marius* is much nearer to being merely due to Pater's contact, a contact no more intimate than that of Marius himself—with something which was happening and would have happened without him.

The true importance of the book, I think, is as a document of one moment in the history of thought and sensibility in the nineteenth century. The dissolution of thought in that age, the isolation of art, philosophy, religion, ethics and literature, is interrupted by various chimerical attempts to effect imperfect syntheses. Religion became morals, religion became art, religion became science or philosophy; various blundering attempts were made at alliances between various branches of thought. Each half prophet believed that he had the whole truth. The alliances were as detrimental all round as the separations. The right practice of "art for art's sake" was the devotion of Flaubert or Henry James; Pater is not with these men, but rather with Carlyle and Ruskin and Arnold, if some distance below them. *Marius* is significant chiefly as a reminder that the religion of Carlyle or that of Ruskin or that of Arnold, or that of Tennyson or that of Browning, is not enough. It represents, and Pater represents far more positively than Coleridge of whom he wrote the words, "that inexhaustible discontent, languor, and homesickness . . . the chords of which ring all through our modern literature".

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THE APPLE-LOFT

by Geoffrey Johnson

When Dick first climbed with footstep soft,
And blind as a mole by the narrow stair,
To the golden gloom of the apple-loft
Out of the blossom's butterfly glare,
At the door he nearly gave a shout
At the strange dim silence left astir
By the chinking cruse of broken spout
And cherry-black lustre, and fantails' whir.
Rich was the room as a nigh-closed shell
Where wandered the ghost of the brilliant may.
But a stranger spell was the cider smell
Of apples lurking in frail, sweet hay:
Wrinkled, but red as autumn skies,
Their cheeks laughed soft in loose gray hair;
Deep as the sea was Dick's surprise
That last year's autumn should still be there—
As deep as if Aunt Anne or Jane,
Who always had that wonderful scent
And hair like hay-wisps in a lane,
Could be in the room from which they went
Once and for all in years gone by;
Or he, in the selfsame flash, could be
The baby who climbed their beds to lie
Between them till early morning tea,
And the boy who stood now half in fear
At the many autumns that must have passed,

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And the silence he could almost hear
Peopled by apples pattering fast. . . .
"How silly!" said Dick, "my own heart's beat
Makes noise in my ears," and, looking around
At the sun's long finger, he laughed. How sweet
The whites of the tanned red apples he found!
So sweet to the body, the more he ate
The more he longed, the sun stood still
In a timeless heaven and never would set,
And far, O far, was the farm on the hill.
So sleepy he went, the hair of the hay
Seemed pulling him down to dream therein
A dream he never would forget.
"Come, lift our blanket," seemed to say
The red little apples, and pulled him in.
"The spell is on you," lazily winked
The cherry-black cruse, but he did not care;
For, sprawled like a dog with chain unlinked,
He basked in a dream he knew not where,
Half light, half shadow, and fitful scent
And the blissful goings on of wings
Haunting his pulse of deep content,
And snatches of morning murmurings
From long ago, dim long ago,
From apples or aunts you could not tell:
"Orchards beyond are all in blow,
But we who are gathered—we find it well,
And have no need, my beautiful dear,
To wish us back in the sun-filled boughs:
We dwell mysteriously near
The laughs and cries of the white-walled house.
Then dream, dream in the gloom and gleam;
It's not yet dawn, you fidgety lad,
Or time to rise for porridge and cream,
Or lead old Dobbin 'round for Dad".

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And strange was the sound of his mother calling
Between the voices: "Dick! Dick! Dick!"
Strange as water drowsily falling
Behind a wood that is dark and thick,
Strange and lost as far bells pealing
For one who swims in sunset weirs,
Strange as the drowned gold music stealing
In diving, water-flooded ears.
And strangest of all was his awaking
And the dusky silence where he coughed;
He almost doubted if mother at baking,
And father at market or Ned in the croft
Were real at all; then, deep breath taking,
Most solemn-eyed, and with footstep soft,
To the light he crept from the apple-loft.

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THE FUTURE OF OLIVER LA FARGE

by John Bird

We were sitting in an abominably furnished parlor in an expensive New York hotel suite. Opposite me was the curator of a well-known American museum—an absurdly young looking man for his job.

"Oliver La Farge—you know him? What's his book like? Rotten? No? Well, I hope it's rank, a complete flop."

These remarks were shot at me in rapid-fire, staccato style, giving me little chance to reply. As well as I could I retorted that *Laughing Boy* (then just off the press) was in my opinion a grand book.

"A flash in the pan," he insisted, belligerently. "He's a one-book man."

To counter this I put in, "Have you read his short stories, *North Is Black*, for example?"

"No. It was wretched, I'm told."

"It was excellent," I said. "Better in its way than *Laughing Boy*."

The curator got up and walked rapidly up and down the room.

"All that you say is bad news. I don't believe it, and I shall be disgusted if it is true. You are a friend of La Farge. You are interested in his success as a writer. I don't give a damn about his writings. I don't give a damn for literature. I am interested in science, and in Oliver La Farge as a scientist. He is a first-rate anthropologist. We need him. We can't do without him. He's the only man who can talk to the Indians and get anything out of them. Have you read his reports on the Tulane University expeditions to Guatemala and Yucatan? If he makes a literary hit now, he'll be ruined completely as a scientist. He'll turn writer—and end by making an ass of himself. I tell you, he's a one-book man."

I have given this conversation in detail because it provides the key to the question that the reading public is asking about Oliver La Farge: "Will he ever repeat the phenomenal success of *Laughing Boy*?" It was his first novel, and was taken by the Literary Guild last November. It won the Pulitzer prize. His friends are anxiously asking, "Will Oliver La Farge be utterly spoiled as a writer by the success of his first novel? Will his publishers and his public try to get him to do the same thing over and over again—to go on writing Indian tales till he bursts?"

I will return to these questions later. Meanwhile I answer them in part by putting other questions. Will Oliver La Farge remain an anthropologist? Will he, as in the past, find his literary material lying ready to hand, a by-product of his work and his way of living? Will he, for example, pass current among the Indians, the Mestizos, and the Latin Americans in Yucatan and elsewhere, not as a novelist looking for copy, but as an anthropologist bending over the sphinx-like riddle of the Mayas? La Farge's writings are the by-product of his living. His life, as yet, has not been conditioned by his writing. I do not be-

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lieve that in any case he will be "spoiled" in the ordinary sense. And I think that he will write better stories and books, not worse, in the future. I hold exactly the opposite point of view from the curator quoted above, and am interested in his writings rather than in his scientific labors. And yet I do think that if La Farge's work were to slump it would be because he had become too much the mere literary man and too little the scientist and the artist in living.

La Farge has an extraordinary heredity. Oliver Hazard Perry La Farge—every one of those names is famous in history or in art. Among his ancestors you will find not only Perry, but Benjamin Franklin. His grandfather was John La Farge, the great American painter, described by Henry Adams as the world's greatest artist in stained glass since Chartres cathedral was built. On his mother's side you will find Lockwoods, New England sea-captains, and Bayards, that race which has sent five senators from Delaware to Washington, and provided Cleveland with a Secretary of State and the first full Ambassador to the Court of St. James. His breeding, in fact, may be described as a cross between a textbook of American History and the Social Register.

Oliver La Farge is only twenty-nine years old. If heredity placed an artistic silver spoon in his mouth, environment shaped him into a literary mould. In and out of his mother's house, whether in New York or Saunderstown, Rhode Island, have come and gone significant literary and political people—Henry Adams, Owen Wister, neighbor and friend, John Jay Chapman, William Allen White, and a host of others as various as these. In Wister's reminiscences of Roosevelt, you will find Mrs. Grant La Farge sailing gaily in and out of the White House, the friend and counsellor of the President. She herself would reject the word "counsellor". When she speaks of Roosevelt it is always "Mr. Roosevelt" seldom "T. R.", and never "Theodore". She has retained the courtesy of the nineteenth century in the less courtly twentieth.

If his mother threw all literature and dozens of live authors at his head, La Farge's father performed for him no less a literary service. Grant La Farge is, of course, an architect of distinction. In addition, he is a literary critic of the first order—one of the best it has been my privilege to know. He has a hard mind which cuts like a diamond, and an unusual directness of judgment. He is hard to please and slow to praise, but he is ready to recognize talent. To this biting literary criticism and intelligent appreciation Oliver La Farge's writings have long been subjected. It has been invaluable for the young, exuberant writer. Often he must have flinched. One real reward for writing *Laughing Boy* was the approval of his parents—approval amounting to enthusiasm.

Heredity and environment may help to explain Oliver La Farge, but they cannot explain him away. Particularly they do not explain *Laughing Boy*—a departure into a new field for serious fiction. And here is the extraordinary thing, which lovers of the curious will seize upon. As a small boy, Oliver was fascinated by the Indians. He always spoke of himself as "Indian Man". This name became corrupted into an affectionate nickname, which has lasted through his boyhood and college days and is in use by his intimates today. Let us say it is "Indy", which is near enough. The future author of *Laughing Boy* thought and dreamed of himself as Indian Man while still paddling around the nursery in bare feet and short pants.

When I lived in New York, I had an Irish charwoman who years ago had been a family servant of the La Farge's and had been passed on to us by them. When my wife periodically came back from visits to Rhode Island, Kate would ask her, "And how is Indian Man? I always liked him a lot".

Curiously enough, Oliver La Farge looks like an Indian. He has a dark skin, dark eyebrows and hair, and a complexion shading

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from Indian red to ivory. He has a long jaw, walks like an Indian, and has the low swinging, gorilla-like arms, which often go with great strength. As the blurbs are quick to tell us, La Farge has repeatedly been mistaken for an Indian on his tours of exploration in Arizona and Yucatan. A Hopi will take him for a Navajo—and a Navajo for one of a different tribe. (The most amusing mistaken identity adventure occurred not to him, but to his companion, Bart. La Farge, Bart, and another friend from Harvard, were on an expedition in Arizona. Bart, a tall good-looking blond youth, had grown a magnificent red beard. The three of them rode on cow ponies into an Indian village. A young Indian squatting outside the schoolhouse stared at them with fascination and fear. He had seen such men as Bart only in Bible pictures. Bolting headlong into the schoolhouse, he announced to the teacher that the Second Coming was here, or at least that a prophet out of the Old Testament had arrived in town.)

Of La Farge's childhood I know nothing at first hand. But a story told to me some years ago by a New York woman, to whom he is a stranger, is enlightening. She was visiting her children at St. Bernard's school. One of the masters led her downstairs into a disordered playroom. In it were boys swarming on top of each other in an impromptu scrimmage. Others were yelling and throwing things about. Over in a corner on a window seat sat a diminutive dark-haired boy with spectacles, bent almost double over a book. He was intent upon his reading, oblivious alike to the rumpus and the newcomers. The lady expressed curiosity about him. "Oh, that is Oliver La Farge," she was told.

At Harvard La Farge's literary bent was marked. He easily won the election for the office of Class Poet of 1924. He was at once president of the *Advocate*, the college literary magazine, and an editor of the *Lampoon*, the comic paper. This was an unusual combination, since all college papers are, in a sense, rivals. Having been on an expedition to the Indian country of Arizona and Utah he embodied his impressions in a series of Indian stories for the *Advocate*. Several of these contained excellent material.

While in New Orleans, two years after leaving college, he sent another Indian tale, "North Is Black", to the *Dial* which published it in January 1927. It was not merely a good Indian love story, it was real literature. Told by an Indian in the first person, the story made remarkable use of short sentences. Edward J. O'Brien included it in his *Best American Short Stories* of that year.

Tulane University, New Orleans, sent La Farge on two expeditions to Guatemala and Yucatan in 1925 and 1927. *Tribes and Temples* by La Farge and Blom, the record of the first expedition, contains some good reading, even for laymen. La Farge's knowledge of Indian dialects and customs, his Indian appearance and his easy sympathy with the Indian give him a peculiar advantage. Many archeologists discover remains, study epigraphy, and quite generally go about their business in the accepted academic way. La Farge's peculiar function is to choose his ground, get to know his Indians, win their perfect confidence, and learn from them all sorts of odds and ends of custom and ritual. Some of the religious ceremonies he has witnessed, I believe, go back to almost incredibly remote ages. He can, by witnessing the actual survivals, sometimes provide the key to rites and practices only inferred by other authorities. It is here that he is so valuable. It was for this reason that our friend the museum curator was so keen to keep him an archeologist and prevent his turning writer.

Readers of *Laughing Boy* will find an admirable Navajo love story, told with great poetry. Many will enjoy especially the descriptions of Indian life which show just this intimacy with Indians which marks his scientific work. For my own part, in *Laughing Boy* I admire especially the way the reader is made to share the love of the Indians for their yellow corn, the pride in craftsmanship

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of the Navajo worker in silver and turquoise, the feeling of the squaw for her weaving.

Returning to our first questions—"Will La Farge be able to repeat his first success? And will he be bullied into writing Indian novels forever and ever?"—the answer is that very probably there will be more short stories of Indian life, and possibly a novel or two, at intervals. In the same way there will probably be tales of Spaniards, half-breeds, and Americans in Central America. But the writers of the publicity blurbs about O. H. P. La Farge II, have missed their best bet. It does not seem to have occurred to them that the descendant of Oliver Hazard Perry is himself a Rhode Islander and a salt-water man. Break La Farge apart and you will find good sea salt crusted on his bones. Born in New York and born to New York, he is not in fact a New Yorker. The better part of his life he has spent in New England, much of it at Saunderstown, Rhode Island, not far from Perry's birthplace, Kingstown. La Farge's secret is his flair for life, his gusto. Nothing which is rich and fruity is strange to him. He is in part a poet. His feeling for the sea is especially deep. What he feels intensely he talks about best. He will surely write of the sea. No one need fear that he will be condemned to writing Indian tales for life.

A description of La Farge as many friends most readily picture him would show him bare-headed, barefoot, clad in old gray flannel trousers and a sweater, stamping about the deck of the sloop *Windigo* off Dutch Island. Probably he is dropping down Narragansett Bay between Beaver Trail and The Bonnet, and may be heading for Block Island. "Jury work", patching things up around the boat, is his delight. Let something carry away the mast, leaving a mere stump, and La Farge will rig up a jury mast out of the boom, and sail the sloop to Wickford for a new spar. He is at home in anything from a Rhode Island dory to a skiff, which he sculls from the stern with one oar, Channel Island fashion. Rhode Island and the sea have a hold on him no less than the desert. He may live with the desert, but the sea is the love of his whole life. Without doubt we shall have tales of the sea from Oliver La Farge, and probably New England stories as well. They will be grand tales, I fully believe—some of them quite as good as *Laughing Boy*.

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HA HA HA I'M LAUGHING

by Storm Jameson

THAT year Peace was signed. I had been asked to one of those parties at which we celebrated the opening of the great post-war ballet. When I arrived at my friend's studio—it was decorated rather beautifully by a young artist who was killed in the war, well, to tell you the truth he was cut in two in the oddest way by a piece of shell—I found the company wiping away tears of laughter. I was embarrassed, as one is on coming into a room to find everyone laughing. It was some minutes before my host found breath to tell me the whole story. Afterwards we laughed again. Jane's husband had come home that morning, demobilized a week earlier than he expected. He arrived at five in the morning, walking from Waterloo, to find when he opened the door of his flat a man's top hat, overcoat, and gloves in the hall. He went further, into the sitting-room and found forks for two, the remains of a cold bird, and two glasses. He went further, into his wife's bedroom. That was funny enough, but the cream of the jest was this. On his last leave Jane had bought him a sumptuous pair of pyjamas for his birthday. He was very pleased with them. He didn't wear them. He said he would save them until the moment when he put off khaki for the last time. Well, not only was the present incumbent of his bed wearing the pyjamas but he had split the jacket right across the back, and all that Jane's husband said, as he looked round the room, was: "You might have picked someone nearer my size, Jane". While we laughed the telephone bell rang. It was a cousin of Jane's, to say that Jane would not be at the party because her husband had shot himself with his service revolver in the bathroom of their flat. He had said: "Is the water hot?", gone in, undressed, and blown the top of his head off, falling neatly half in and half out of the bath. We looked at one another. Someone—another returned soldier—said: "Of all the comic gestures!" We all laughed. And when we remembered that Jane's husband had gone through four years of war without even a scratch it seemed funnier still.

Thinking it over, it was rather a sad story. The bit about the pyjamas was sad. But it was funny at the time.

The fact is that we are no longer impressed by final gestures. The sight of one of our friends taking up a dignified attitude does not fill us with respect. It makes us think him an ass, an amusing or (oftener) a boring ass. In the same way we prefer to look through our legs at the heroic and the noble. We like them better from that angle. There are still a few people, even in England, who make dignified gestures and admire dignity itself. They are almost all elderly or a Sitwell. The rest put off dignity when they put off their belief in God and in the beauty of chastity. The modern spirit wears a grinning mask and spends its leisure catching others bending.

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Leaving aside (to come to them later) the circumstances of this odd birth, what evidence? When the modern spirit speaks for itself, not hurriedly at parties but after due deliberation, what sort of sounds does it make? Quite clearly the place to look for the modern spirit is neither in the novel nor in the legitimate drama. It is true that we have no censor of novels. The thought of the Boston Watch and Ward Society makes us smile. With our native genius for accepting with the left hand what we are rather finely deprecating with the right we order things differently in England. The censor of our novels is the gentleman who does the ordering for XYZ, the big circulating library. If, when he opens my new novel, he finds it what he will probably call "a bit off", he will order twenty copies instead of two hundred and fifty and keep them under the counter. He may even decline to order any at all. Since I live by the number of my novels that my friends and others borrow from their library this is a serious business for me. You may be sure, therefore, that when I am writing a novel always before my eyes I see the not-too-pale spectre of the gentleman who buys for XYZ and whose taste crystallized in 1900. I try not to offend him. It is not very often that Mr. James Douglas has to call in the Public Prosecutor to deal with a novel, since only a modern spirit with a large private income can afford to write without an eye on his library sales.

Plays are censored. It is impossible for a serious modern dramatist to be as honest as Euripides or Wycherley. Neither *Medea* nor *The Plain Dealer,* if cast in the mould of 1930, would get past the censor. The place to look for the modern spirit is not in the legitimate theatre. It is in revue. For reasons known best to himself the censor whose soul would be sickened by the honest rage of a Wycherley is unmoved by the offhand indecencies of the best revues. I have to use the term "indecency" for the sake of the argument, since if it is indecent to scream with laughter at fornication and infidelity the revue is indecent. In fact it is not. It is only modern. Adultery is funny if you think it is. The modern spirit is perfectly at home in revue, where it can grin widely at the things we used to feel sentimental or solemn about, and guy everything, even itself. It is not impossible that the Victorian wife knew that bed was the best place to ask her husband for a new frock but she could not make a song and dance of it. Revue can. It guys the solemn Edwardian honeymoon and points the jest with a neat scene in which a modern couple, on the first night of their honeymoon, display a perfect familiarity with each other's bedroom habits. It guys love, in a song of which the point is that there is no difference between sexual relations whether practised by men or guinea pigs. The early Christian fathers were of the same opinion. It is true, if you think it is. And extremely funny if you take it in the right (modern) spirit. Everything is funny if you happen to be in the mood to laugh. Solomon is funny.

Solomon was a lad in his day
He had ten thousand wives, hip, hip, hooray,
Yet the damn fool slept with his fathers, they
say—

Fornication and adultery are both very comical in revue. So are birth, copulation and death. Revue holds the glass to the modern spirit and the modern spirit splits its sides at seeing itself so tartly reflected.

I call a more reputable witness. When a great Victorian poet wrote a love song it was far removed in tone from the pure and charming carnality of the medieval Latin love lyric, from the sensuous loveliness of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, from the intellectualized passion of the seventeenth. There is a great difference between—

Nocte cum illa si dormiero,
si sua labra semel suxero,
mortem subire

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placenter obire,
vitamque finire
libens potero. . . .

and—

Christ, that my love were in my arms
And I in my bed again!

and—

She is coming, my dove, my dear;
She is coming, my life, my fate;
The red rose cries, "She is near, she is near."
And the white rose weeps, "She is late."

This last was written for a public which, at worst in theory, revered womanhood, sentimentalized passion, and worshipped a living God, by a poet whose poetry is dyed in his reverence for good women, his sentimental attitude to passion and his belief in God. Yet the stream too broad for leaping that separates his love song from the two earlier ones is a brook to the torrent that divides him from the author of the "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock":

I grow old. . . . I grow old. . . .
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.
Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat
a peach?
I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk
upon the beach.

In that Mr. Eliot (there are others) the modern spirit has its laureate. If he would be so good as to write a revue it would be tarter, more comic, and nearer the modern bone than any written for Mr. Cochran. It is possible that we should all be too startled to laugh. The modern spirit, used to seeing itself without its trousers, might not like to see itself stripped to the skeleton.

What happened? How were we brought or how did we bring ourselves to so fine a point of humor that we laugh as lightly at the sins that shocked and the ideals that uplifted our fathers? Why, I will tell you. In those years, the years before the Great War, we had just escaped from the firm Victorian hand. When I say "we" I mean the generation which in 1914 was in its late teens or first twenties. We were aware of having escaped. Later generations can have no idea with what delight we fingered our ridiculous freedoms or how self-consciously we practised them. We were, you understand, brought up in the Victorian shadow. It fell across our childhood. We had been afraid of hell-fire. We remembered the fate of the woman taken in adultery. In those days the rigid moral code of an age that revered women and worked them to death, that kept its homes pure and its raffishness nearly out of sight, was still, or seemed to be, intact. And suddenly it cracked. One day we were still in the shadow and the next we had stepped out of it, into the new age. We read *The New Machiavelli* and discussed the jolliness of our bodies. Those of us who could not contrive to have a jolly sex life could talk about it—and talked interminably. We flapped our wings at the scarecrow of convention. We perched on its dead arm and ate the young (and green) fruit. Young women and young men held endless intimate conversations on the right to live freely. Flushed and deliciously excited, they discussed sex and the brotherhood of man. The two were oddly linked in our minds. That young man and that young woman, their heads close, their eyes shining, are as likely to be ardent socialists as lovers, and their talk all of ideals and not of bodies. We took ourselves seriously. Those of us who thought it a duty to defy the moral code did it with a high mind, in the spirit of the great reformers. We sinned with due and pleasant deliberation. We were not light-minded. We laughed less, much less, than we talked. Oh, those splendid interminable talks! Oh, the brotherhood of man and the beauty and duty of passion.

Our sins shall be forgiven us for we died young. We were still talking when the War happened. That silenced most of us. Dead young men neither talk nor make love. The

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rest of us suffered a war change. If you think about it for a moment you will see at once why we laugh. First you have a war—the *First* World War, as a dear dead and let us hope well damned Colonel liked to call it—which kills and maims I forget how many millions, but it was an amusingly large number, of young men. While it is going we absorb quantities of the most superb sentiments. Priest, politician and press—billed as The Three Polyphiloprogenitive P's on the program of the show—gave birth to them without effort. We swallowed the lot. We fought to the last drop of blood, we kept faith with the dead who died for us, we waved flags and blew trumpets for the survivors. We marvellously increased the reputation of Mr. Lloyd George. And when it was all over we made—that is to say the victorious European nations, under the far-from-approving eye of America made—the most comically iniquitous Peace that could possibly have been imagined. We yielded to none of those temptations to be generous, to be far-seeing, to be even merely common-sensible, which assailed us. We stirred Europe around with a devil's spoon and made hell broth. Since then there have been several small wars, not big enough to be really amusing, mere innuendoes. Since then most of the nations have signed a pact to make war impossible. You may have to go a long way to see a funnier sight than the admirals of the Great Powers struggling against the temptation not to build any more dreadnoughts.

Think. Think of all the superb sentiments. Think of your tears. Think of the newspapers you bought and read at street corners, reading not the news but the Lists. Think of the Lists. Think of the new spirit that was baptized in the trenches, recorded in the press and smothered in its sleep by Mr. Lloyd George, M. Poincaré, and the other bravoes of the great Peace. Think of the new world that was announced to follow the War. Think of the land fit for heroes. And having thought look at it.

You can't help laughing, can you? Like hell you can. After you have made the most complete fool of yourself and talked so much nonsense. After you have been invited to win the War and had a joke like the Peace played on you. After you have seen what heroes get for being heroic. After you have discovered where patriotism banks its profits. You would naturally laugh.

Having once begun to laugh it is hard to stop. We go on, and from laughing to think how heroic we were arrive easily at laughing at any large and swelling notion—such as that love wears, that young women are chaste, that age is to be respected, that politicians are sometimes disinterested, that politics is more than a game, that God is not mocked. It was extraordinarily stupid of Jane's husband to blow the top of his head off. He should have spanked Jane until she could not sit down and then come to the party himself and told us about it. That way life is amusing.

The truth is that there is a natural limit set to our capacity for being indignant. Before the War we could grow comfortably hot over a number of small ills. But where in the name of sanity is the profit in becoming indignant about the present state of Europe? Not only the profit but the means. There is not enough indignation in any living soul to cope with that monument to human greed, folly and injustice. As I write it occurs to me that the last thing I remember to have felt indignant about was the state of Austria after the war. I lay awake at night and thought of those starving children. I lived on a meal a day to give a few useless shillings to Save-the-Children Funds. I grew hot with anger against war and war-makers. Time went on and suddenly all that indignation vanished. It will take a massacre to set it going again. After all, one's first duty is to keep sane and earn a living. Think what, without looking abroad, I should have to take into account if I allowed myself to become indignant now. Not only statesmen al-

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lowing another, bloodier, and final war to arrange itself but dewy-eyed young men writing novels about the emotions of mature women. Not only England sinking, sinking, but Miss Totty Lightly and dear Mrs. Ephorbus and Mr. Fisher the demotic banker and young Lady Ciro and her husband who plays tennis so well and decorates houses for his friends and that well-known and popular young couple, Lord and Lady Carabas, who lie all day in the sun at Antibes and give such amusing parties. Not only the past but the present. Not only the present but the future.

Certain qualities, in life and art, are not encouraged by the modern habit of guying everything that used to be considered heroic, dignified and sublime. It is too soon to speak with any confidence, but some things may be said. There is an almost complete neglect of general ideas. It is useless to quote Mr. Eliot here. He sits apart under his triple hat of classicism, royalism and Anglo-Catholicism, worshipped by the few and completely unobserved of the rest. The most part of the younger writers are completely immersed in the personal and the particular. This has two discernible effects. The first shows itself in the extraordinary fertility and success of women novelists. Women are—whether by temperament or as a consequence of centuries of neglected education and confinement within narrow bounds of interest—not interested in general ideas. They turn naturally and with pleasure to seek out particular and individual traits in the persons of whom they write. They sink themselves in the characters of their books in such a way that they themselves become emotionally involved in the activities of these characters. They write from the heart or from some other emotional center and not from the head. Intellect, as a critical faculty, hardly enters into their work at all. They thus produce, in increasing quantities, lively books, full of incident, color, emotion, which are not written so much as recorded. Their powers of observation are highly developed. They can see and describe with complete accuracy a woman in love and the table on which she leans to write to her lover. But they cannot and do not feel the impulse to create a character which will be a type of women in love. What interests them is to pin down Mary Smith, who has changed her style of hairdressing because she is in love and writes to her lover in violet ink on one side of the paper.

Their novels, while excluding all general ideas with which it would be fatiguing to have to grapple, perform another service in providing a channel down which may flow all the emotions and the sensibilities which we suppress while we are laughing. They are thus at once a release and a distraction. The other mark of our love for the particular and personal is the unceasing interest in biography. Note in passing that the distinctively modern spirit in biography is a spirit of irony and ridicule. We read biographies and memoirs as readily as novels, and biographies of poets much more readily than their poems. Novels have become increasingly biographical in form and autobiographical in content. And we may expect, following on the success of Mr. Robert Graves's autobiography, a flood of books in which young men and women write of themselves without even the worn disguise of a fictional form. Again, this development has been made easy by the slackening of habits of personal reserve and dignity.

I am inclined to believe that the only literature of value left by my generation will be its war books. These books, some, like *Undertones of War*, written with a fine and deliberate sense of prose style, others simple narratives or diaries, record not merely the actual experiences of their writers but the events of that time in their lives when they were most sharply and consciously alive. And, further, in almost every instance these books are the record of events which outlast and outshine every other event that has happened or can happen to the men who write

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them. Nothing since the War is so real to these men as it was, and is. One man has been fourteen times to see *Journey's End*, not to watch the play but to look at the setting, to fill that dug-out with the stained canvas on its walls with other figures and to catch the echo of other voices than those of the actors. These memories are real to them. These memories are all they have to leave of themselves which is real.

Apart from the writers of war books the most remarkable and remarked writer of this generation is Mr. Noel Coward. It is my sincere hope that young Mr. Coward—there is, after all, no saying what elderly Mr. Coward may be like—will not be overlooked by posterity, since he, and not Mr. Eliot and not the women novelists, is the authentic voice of the modern spirit.

Last summer I was in London. I had called to see a young novelist whom I did not know well and in whose charming rooms I found two other young women, both novelists, and two young men. The young men were journalists of the new order, and I remembered that the day before the editor of a London newspaper had said to me that there were no real journalists left. Their place had been taken, he said, by young men from Oxford with a neat tripping style, three dinner jackets and a connection in society. It may be true. The time of day was not right for dinner jackets, but both young men were firmly connected to society and clanked their chains over the carpet with every step they took. We talked about people we knew and their love affairs and their latest books. That is to say, I listened, since I am not often very useful in company. There was nothing new said. The love affairs were all alike. There is only one way of committing adultery and it is funny if you think it is. We laughed a great deal and the young men left to dress for dinner. Afterwards, on my way home, I tried to discover the real difference between these young men and women and the very young men and women who met just before the war and talked about love and books. In 1914 we did not guy our love affairs and had not yet written any books. But there is another difference and after a time I discovered it. These young men and women imagine that they have no illusions.

Ha ha ha I'm laughing.

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V. SACKVILLE-WEST

by Hugh Walpole

Once and again there arises among the persistently named and automatically defined schools a single figure who refuses to be defined and seems to show all of the assured critics that schools have no power and the naming of them no wisdom.

I doubt whether any period of English literature has known such perpetual chatter about schools and tendencies as our own, and this I suppose is natural and inevitable. We have reached a time when we have analyzed all the literary arts out of their very bareness, when we name so quickly leaders of one tendency or another that younger writers discover themselves to be followers and imitators even before they know it. When, for instance, Lockhart and his friends denounced the Cockney school they were heralding the opening of a magnificent new world in English letters, and the more glorious that world became the shriller were their denunciations. But with us today it seems to be enough for critics to proclaim the forming of a new school for that same school instantly to decease. How long is it since *Ulysses*? Ten years or so, I imagine, and already all the imitations of *Ulysses* and the imitators of those imitations are dwindling down into a thin, dry little stream of tricks of style and self-conscious obscenities.

Ulysses is surely the greatest book in English letters of the last twenty years; greatest in every sense, for its poetry, its vocabulary, its humor, its irony, its truth and its originality, but it has been as fatal as the Great War in the lives of young men, and it stands up like a high white tower, with broken images scattering the ground around its base.

This picturesque imagery simply means that for some reason or another the school of *Ulysses* does not possess vitalizing forces. It is a school of negation, of disruption and of despair, and I know of no instance in any literature in which a great writer whose only message is that of irony and disgust has formed after him a great school. That was not the only message of Swift, nor of Voltaire, nor of Stendhal, nor of Proust in our own time.

There has been, however, one very definite effect of the whole of the *Ulysses* influence, and that is that the difficulties that always beset romantic and creative writing of the more energetic kind have been in the last twenty years immensely increased. It is one of the catchwords of English lecturers in America just now, amusingly satirized by Carl Van Vechten in his new novel, that there is beginning in both England and America a new romantic period. I think this may be true and I am naturally hopeful that it is so, not only because I am myself a romantic writer, but chiefly because I believe that in the novel and in poetry some sort of spirit, neither destructive nor ironic, has got to come if our literature is not to die of disappointed inertia. At present the romantic writers in England are few. Masefield, Walter

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de la Mare, the Sitwells, new young writers like Graham Greene, and J. B. Priestley—these are a few names. They are all, without exception, attacked whenever their works appear by the present high critics of literature. De la Mare's latest book, *Desert Islands*, a magnificent work, was treated with a critical arrogance that was absurd. Sacheverell Sitwill's *The Gothick North*, a book that thirty years ago would have been at once acclaimed everywhere, has created little attention, and yet, more and more, the tide seems to be turning.

This is all a preface to the interesting and unusual position of Vita Sackville-West in English letters. Her whole color is romantic and yet always unsentimental and real. She shares this position, in my opinion, with the two other women in England who are the best women writers of prose living there today—I mean Virginia Woolf and Rebecca West. You may count it personal prejudice or no, but it seems to me that Mrs. Woolf is beyond question writing the best English prose in England after George Moore, and although I do not think Miss West a good novelist and do not believe that she will ever become a good novelist, and although I think that she never stops long enough to catch the tail of the fish that she is pursuing, there are, in her last book of essays, *Strange Necessity*, pages of simply superb writing. I hold that both these women are romantic writers in the true and proper sense of the word and Miss Sackville-West makes the third. Yet she is as unlike them both as she well can be.

In the first place her background is unique among English writers of the present day. Every writer of note just now in England comes from the middle classes. They are none the worse for that, but they would also be none the worse (contrary to common superstition) if they came from the aristocracy. Now that the aristocracy in England is disappearing it would be an interesting thing for English letters if we had one or two more representatives of it. It is absurd to say that duchesses, because they are called duchesses, are not so interesting as housemaids. They are just as interesting, neither more nor less. What is wrong is when a writer of the lower middle class goes to lunch with a duchess and, in one of his novels, notices with particular attention the second footman. That is what Mr. Wells has often done in the past. In fact, the mysteries of the English upper classes are almost entirely hid, while the mysteries of the lower middle classes have been so long and in so many directions laid blatantly bare that we are sick to death of them.

Miss Sackville-West grew up, without thinking it in the least odd, among the Edwardian aristocracy of England. A duke was as little interesting to her as a police officer is to Edgar Wallace. She simply took in with her earliest breath a sense of beauty that lies in the very heart of old houses like Knole, and this beauty was essentially English, not because she wished to be patriotic, but simply because it was the beauty that lay to her hand. No one, however, can know her at all without realizing sharply her first characteristic, which is independence, and a determination to be free. She had beauty and friends, and everything was easy for her, but she has never for a moment relied on these things to make her circumstances. She is determined on making them for herself.

Nor would she hurry about that business. It must be, I think, nearly twenty years ago that, when staying with her for the first time, I was shown drawers packed with manuscripts. She had at that time published nothing beyond a very few poems. She did not seem to wish to publish anything. Her hands were full of all kinds of things. She had a lovely old house, a brilliant young husband, children, and there was nothing at all in which she was not interested. Moreover she was then and she is now completely void of any sort of sense of literary competition. I cannot say how refreshing I find her to be in this respect. I believe that all trades, pro-

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fessions and arts are inflicted with the disease of valuing, in a kind of stock-exchange fashion, one reputation against another, but I suppose the profession of writing is inflicted more thoroughly with this horrible insect than any other. It is a perfectly useless pursuit, this estimating of position against position, partly because there is room for everybody, partly because no contemporary can determine anybody's status. But Miss Sackville-West has been always altogether free of it. She stands alone and even today when she has only one English woman poet for her rival, Miss Edith Sitwell, she refuses to be drawn into competition.

This is all part of her independence. She did not begin to write novels because she wanted to be a leading woman novelist. She did not begin to write poetry because English women poets are rare. She has done everything in her life, I imagine, simply because she thought it would be a delightful thing to do. The result of this is that she has made her own atmosphere, by collecting around her, quite unconsciously, a number of other atmospheres; first the atmosphere of Knole, English fields, houses, hills and rivers; the atmosphere of Persia and the East; the atmosphere of a certain kind of English society; the atmosphere of certain friends who seemed to her delightful people and therefore good friends to have. I would say that she has never definitely chosen anything or anybody all her life long, but that when a place or a person or a book has appeared close to her and has seemed the sort of place or person or book natural to her, she has attached it to herself without consciously thinking about it. This makes inevitably her position romantic, whether she wishes it or no, because the essence of romantic living is to find pleasure in the things around one, and she has found intense pleasure in them. This intensity of approach is at the basis of all her work.

I do not think that before *The Edwardians* she was a very good novelist. *The Dragon in Shallow Waters, Heritage* and *The Heir* are works of atmosphere, not of character creation, philosophical ideas or narrative force. Her cleverest book of this kind, *Seducers in Equador*, is a brilliant imitation rather than an original creation. Nevertheless I believe *The Heir* to be one of the best of modern long short-stories and I thought for some time that that was where her talent lay—in the creation of a beautiful place, its loveliness evoked by a poet, the figures in it like statues in a garden.

The Dragon in Shallow Waters has a moving story, but when one looks back on it the scenes rather than the people are what remain in one's memory. There is no distinctive irony in it. Her only ironic work is *Seducers in Equador*. She feels the beauty of things about which she is writing too strongly to wish to destroy them, and that points at once to her greatest distinction as a philosopher—that seeing the world quite as clearly as Mr. Huxley, Mr. Aldington or Mr. Graves, knowing its treacheries, disappointments and ugliness, she prefers to count her assets. This seems to me the natural course for a poet. I have always wondered, for instance, how Mr. T. S. Eliot can perceive so sharply such astonishing beauties and yet proclaim life to be nothing but a waste land.

Seducers in Equador was one of the earliest pupils in Mrs. Woolf's school for good writing. I do not know how highly Miss Sackville-West values this amusing little book. She may indignantly protest that it owes nothing at all to Mrs. Woolf. Authors are given to these indignations, but it is a further fact that Mrs. Woolf is Miss Sackville-West's closest friend among writers; they meet constantly and understand each other perfectly. All the more remarkable then that Miss Sackville-West has kept her independence, that most precious of her gifts, so resolutely, for *Seducers in Equador* is the only one of her books that shows any sign of Mrs. Woolf's influence.

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. Here it is perhaps pertinent to remark that Mrs. Woolf is the only novelist to make use of all the new technique derived from *Ulysses*, Dorothy Richardson, Proust and the rest, to give it a new turn and twist, to keep it nevertheless personal, and yet to create character as the older novelists did before her. She has earnestly protested in her American preface to *Mrs. Dalloway* against being included in any definite school, of being considered as an influence at all. She remains quite as independent as Miss Sackville-West, but her influence is so pervasive, even when you do not know her, that it is extraordinary that Miss Sackville-West has remained so apart, even though she knows her so well.

The earlier novels, *The Dragon in Shallow Waters* and the others, are even old fashioned in their clear, straightforward narrative, natural dialogue and avoidance of tricks. But I was afraid when *Seducers in Equador* arrived that Miss Sackville-West was going to be only another of the clever modern novelists who think that a cynical avoidance of full stops and commas and a desperate weariness about all sexual relations means of necessity a new masterpiece.

It is just here, I think, that the crisis of Miss Sackville-West's literary history occurred. She was saved by going to Teheran, where her husband has a diplomatic post. That excursion proved to her and to those who were interested in her that she was a poet, first, last and all the time. This poetic necessity in her was so strong that Persia was as fine food for it as the English fields and lanes. She responded so quickly to what she saw and felt that she had no time to sit down and be clever while her emotion ebbed away. Her response to Persia was curiously like that of another fine woman writer, another most independent explorer, Gertrude Bell. Here was an influence that I think did determine a great deal in Miss Sackville-West's career. *The Letters of Gertrude Bell* are now I suppose fairly well known. They are among the fine, absolutely independent works of our time, like Munthe's *The Story of San Michele*, Norman Douglas's *Old Calabria* and Lawrence's *Twilight in Italy*. With these books, all of them individual and fearless, Miss Sackville-West's Persian travel books quite naturally take their place. One cannot read about her Persian adventures without personal encouragement, for what she says is that it does not matter where you go, you are bound to arrive at a beautiful destination. I do not think that the modern pessimistic cynic who is forever exclaiming about the ugliness, monotony and degradation of this present world could have better personalities to consider than those of Gertrude Bell and Dr. Munthe and Vita Sackville-West. No changes in modern civilization or in any civilization, anywhere, at any time, can do anything destructive to travellers who create as they go. Pessimism is for those who have time to sit at home and consider livers rather than life.

Out of the personal adventure came oddly enough Miss Sackville-West's most English work, *The Land*. *The Land*, a volume of English Georgics, won the Hawthornden prize, an award which seems in general to slay mercilessly the recipient. *The Land*, however, was a fine enough work to scorn its prizes. It has been interesting to see how this book, which has nothing in it cheap or sentimental or melodramatic, has gone its way from house to house, quietly and without any shouting. It would have been very easy for Miss Sackville-West to write a sentimental poem about the English countryside and the English peasant. It is furthermore extremely difficult for anyone in these days to write such a poem without too obvious memories of the country enthusiasts from John Clare to Edmund Blunden. It would be false to say that there is nothing of John Clare in *The Land*, but there is only enough of him to make one happily realize that what more than a hundred years ago gave that lonely, half-starved poet hours of almost

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maddening happiness also inspired another poet who was born in such very different surroundings. *The Land* is all Miss Sackville-West's own and the first remarkable thing about it is that she has not allowed her immense knowledge to check her poetry, and on the other hand she has not subdued her facts lest she should be considered too erudite. There is a complete farmer's year in *The Land*, from which any farmer might acquire an amount of useful knowledge. There are lines like these about hops, for instance:

Yet another care,
The pruning and the training of the hop,
Busies the farmer while the year is young,
When bines are cut and cleaned, and poles are bare,
And the loam is richly black with farmyard dung;
Then comes the pruning-knife and severs clean
Unwanted shoots.

And a little later she speaks of "aphis, that bitter poison kills", and "mould, that sulphur-dust destroys". Every page is thus covered with technical information, but poetry is never obscured. There are times when, as for instance in the now famous lines about the bees, she rises to a kind of poetic ecstasy, but because her facts are always solidly there her ecstasy is never loose nor foolish. Everywhere there is poetry. I will give only one example of how lovely her poetry can be:

That was a spring of storms. They prowled the night;
Low level lightning flickered in the east
Continuous. The white pear-blossom gleamed
Motionless in the flashes; birds were still;
Darkness and silence knotted to suspense,
Riven by the premonitory glint
Of skulking storm, a giant that whirled a sword
Over the low horizon, and with tread
Earth-shaking, ever threatened his approach,
But to delay his terror kept afar,
And held earth stayed in waiting like a beast
Bowed to receive a blow. But when he strode
Down from his throne of hills upon the plain,
And broke his anger to a thousand shards
Over the prostrate fields, then leapt the earth
Proud to accept his challenge; drank his rain;
Under his sudden wind tossed wild her trees;
Opened her secret bosom to his shafts;
The great drops spattered; then above the house
Crashed thunder, and the little wainscot shook
And the green garden in the lightning lay.

I suppose that the poem to which *The Land* bears closest resemblance is Maurice Hewlett's at present neglected masterpiece, *The Song of the Plough*. Hewlett was never quite the poet that Miss Sackville-West is, but there is a stark, unsentimental but emotional strength in his book and a love of his country which makes *The Song of the Plough* brother to this sister book. Out of this poem, from another angle, one must mention her book *Knole and the Sackvilles*, for the two have this in common, that taken side by side a great section of English life is presented. Knole has had of late a very considerable part in English letters. It is the background for Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and also the background of Miss Sackville-West's *The Edwardians*. I will make a personal confession when I admit that I had it myself in mind for the background of my own *Wintersmoon* and was destroyed by that very attempt because the more I thought of Knole the smaller my Wintersmoon dwindled and yet whenever I tried to create Wintersmoon separately, Knole would keep breaking in. Most books of the *Knole and the Sackvilles* class are killed by the history and the accumulation of detail. Miss Sackville-West is writing an official history and yet she succeeds in doing something more than that, as when, for instance, after describing the brown gallery, she writes, "Some of the best pieces of English furniture are ranged down each side of this gallery: portentously important chairs, Jacobean cross-legged, or later, love seats in their original coverings, whether of plum and silver, or red brocade with heavy fringes, or green with silver fringes, or yellow silk, sprigged in black, or powder blue;

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and all have their attendant stool, squatting beside them. They are lovely, silent rows, forever holding out their arms and forever disappointed". This last sentence gives unforgettably, in a few words, the whole atmosphere of Knole, its poignant sense of hoping to receive again from somewhere life that it can understand and that belongs to it. Her whole book is informed with this pathos. She is a historian here, turning facts into poetry and out of Knole has come *The Edwardians*. This has been, oddly enough, the book that has, in combination with some broadcasting and some critical reviews and the writing of her husband, Harold Nicolson, brought her at last into very public prominence. I say oddly, because I fancy that she wrote *The Edwardians* much more light-heartedly than any of the earlier novels or *The Land*. It was derived from her mature amusement at her sense of the world in which she spent her childhood. That world is becoming distant enough from us now to be part of romantic history, but it is not as yet far enough away to be entirely detached from us; it would perhaps be not past history at all had it not been for the war. It is the customary attitude now to the life and times of King Edward to see them as something very light, frivolous, foolish and touching—touching because the citizens of that world were so completely unaware of the catastrophe that was approaching; but Miss Sackville-West has very wisely written her book as a period piece, allowing the reader to give his emphasis to that catastrophe himself. It seems at first to be nothing more nor less than a kind of Beardsley drawing when you see the duchess at her toilet and you say to yourself, "Well, how absurd is this insistence on corsets and padded hair and puffed out sleeves and tiny waists and how amusing that anybody should have wasted so much time over such things!"—quite forgetting that most of the daily papers in this present moment offer column after column of suggestions about short or long dresses, Eton crops, and bathing costumes at Deauville. I said, I think, that in her earlier novels the creation of character was not her strongest gift and I do not think that even here she has quite mastered the art. You feel as you read that the people in this Edwardian world are alive, stand on their own feet, but will be still more alive in another moment, and the book stops just before that moment comes; they are there, but they are not fully revealed. But the greatest charm of *The Edwardians* is that it is a satirical picture without cruelty, and a poem with humor. Chevron, the house, is the poetry of the book. It is a house extraordinarily alive and not only alive but timeless. When you watch the scattering of fantastic clothes, absurd carriages, games of croquet, garden parties, social chatter that is like the whispering of ghosts, all of it blowing like leaves about the grounds and walls of this beautiful place, you have a theme that is true of all periods and not only of the Edwardian one. She has been able to bring her whole poetic feeling to a proper climax in her magnificent description of the coronation at the end of the book and there she shows what an artist she can be.

I do not think that I am claiming for Miss Sackville-West any of the extravagant things that personal friendship and interest sometimes blind one to claiming. I think that she is only in mid-career, but I must confess that I find among all the writers in England no one else who has achieved such distinction in so many different directions. The novelists who are also poets, the poets who are also novelists, are very rare always. Among the novelists now that Hardy is dead, Rudyard Kipling (who is not really a novelist), Ford Madox Ford and Rose Macaulay are almost the only examples of whom I can think as poets, and among the poets only Osbert Sitwell and Martin Armstrong as novelists.

Here, at any rate, is a most interesting figure, someone who is gracious, humorous, and always a creator.

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CONFESSIONS OF A CONFESSION STORY WRITER

Anonymous

"We need more stories," a trusted editor of one of the Confession magazines wrote to me shortly after its inception. "You can write better stuff than anything we are able to get for publication. Try something. The formula is simple: Sex and Success. A girl loves not wisely but too well. Her lover betrays her. She suffers. She struggles. Either she raises herself from the mud by her own efforts, or she marries a splendid man, preferably rich, and thus accomplishes the same thing. You can let her have a baby or not. The Big Boss thinks it is a good idea for the betrayed heroines to have babies. Some of the rest of us don't think so. Use your judgment. You can ring all the changes you want to on the above theme."

I had sold only two stories up to that time, both of them detective stories. This is significant when placed beside the statement of my friend the editor that I could write better stories than they were able to get for publication. Its explanation lies, I think, in this: that the writers who were really telling their life stories did not know how to make their stories dramatic; and the professional writers who tried to fake up confessions did not know how to make their tales simple and crude enough to sound real. Hence the opening for me.

I had very little faith that such a magazine as the one that my friend represented could possibly succeed. I had seen its first issue and had thought it such an obvious fake that it could not deceive an intelligent person, and so crude that it could not please anybody. But my friend the editor asked me to write for it, and I had always wanted to write; so I decided to try a story built on the formula of Sex and Success.

Frankly, however, though I had had a very liberal upbringing in which a spade was always called a spade and was not considered shameful, I had somehow acquired a prejudice against salacious sex stories; and frankly also I found a real personal discomfort in the thought of a nice girl being ruined by an unscrupulous man. I determined that my story should not be salacious, and that my heroine was *not* going to be ruined. She might come near to being ruined, and all the other people in the story might *think* that she *had* been ruined. But I would know that she had remained pure, and so should the reader.

My first story went something like this: "I was an ignorant and innocent girl, lured to the city by an unscrupulous man with promises of love. But at the door of the hotel to which he took me, I saw two people from my home town and realized by my companion's manner that he was not on the square. I left him, and, too proud to go back to the slurs and gossip of the home town, I entered training in a hospital. Here I went through all sorts of drudgery, but studied hard and worked cheerfully. I met a wonderful surgeon and fell in love with him. At the beginning

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of the World War I went over on the same ship with him. The ship was torpedoed. My doctor saved me and told me his love. After the war we were married and have lived happily ever since".

Rather a thin story; but it sold. My next story went something like this: "I was a seventeen year old girl, just out of high school, sent into a country district to teach. My pupils were hard to handle till the man at the farm where I boarded came and horsewhipped the big bully that had been bothering me and told the rest to behave themselves. After that things went all right at school; but the man's wife got jealous and began to say and hint at terrible things. Then she fell sick, and I nursed her till she died. Meantime the man and I discovered that we were really in love. We never told each other till after the woman's death. A year later we were married. Now we have two dear little children and I am very happy".

Another thin story; but it also sold. So did a dozen or more others. Each time I think I got a little nearer to the sex theme or the success theme, or both. Once when I really combined them I won a prize. By this time I had learned to portray intimate or daring situations with a disarming simplicity. I used the nudity theme—the artist and model situation—developing the idea that nudity in itself is not nasty, and may have some very beautiful and uplifting effects. I used the desert island situation, with its dangerous intimacies and temptations—always nobly resisted by the man in the story. I used the alcoholic intoxication theme, in which the heroine under the influence of alcohol did things that she would never have done before—but happened to be with an honorable man, who fell in love with her and married her. I used the "painted woman" theme, where the woman of the streets saves the man with whom she has been seen by his bride-to-be on the night before the wedding by snatching aside the pistol with which he was trying to kill himself and being blinded by the wound in her own head. Of course he married her, and they were happy and had a lovely baby.

One editor teased me on the virtue of my heroines, and the cleanness of my stories. He said, "What our readers want is polite pornography". I said I thought he was wrong. But he insisted that he was right. I said that I wouldn't write the stuff anyway, and he laughed.

About this time my friend, the editor who said to me, "Look here! Why don't you write had got me into the confession-writing game, a serial? We have begun to get pretty nearly enough really true short stories. But our serials are practically all fiction, and they are terrible".

I said, "All right. What are the requirements of the serial?"

He said, "Five or six instalments of about eight thousand words each, with a break of intense suspense at the end of each instalment. The break is vital. The heroine should be menaced in some way. The villain should threaten her honor; or too great a love on her part for some man should threaten her downfall; or some cherished ambition vital to the story should be balancing on the edge of success or failure. But never forget that a girl's greatest possession is her chastity".

So I went home and wrote the following story: "I was a ragged, dirty, parentless waif of the slums. I had a very loud, raucous voice when speaking. I was, as I grew older, attractive to men. I slept on the floor in the same room with five men and an old woman. The old woman died. One of the men tried to make love to me. I eluded him one night. The next night I had to flee into the streets, and he followed. A little Jew interfered. The villain turned on the Jew and, still holding me, knocked him down. Then he took me into his foul embrace, pressing his face closer and closer to mine. I fought with all my strength, but I could feel my strength going . . . (*To be continued*)

"The little Jew came to and hit the villain with a brick just in time to save me. He took

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me to his wife. They were kind to me. I had a bath and learned what it was to be clean. I fell in love with their baby. One day, imitating the wife, I tried to sing to it. I found I could. The wife heard me. She said I had a voice. The Jew said so too. The wife's brother heard me and said he could get me a job with a musical show. I was thrilled. He took me to a manager. I was all suspense. The man looked at me as if he were unclothing me with his eyes. He ordered me to lift my skirts high so that he could see my legs . . . (*To be continued*)".

From that point on the heroine of the story experienced the romantic thrills of working up from a chorus girl to a grand opera singer. Her honor was threatened by two more villains. She fell in love, but was estranged from her lover through a misunderstanding until she won fame by her own efforts. At her first concert she sang her lover's favorite song, he came to her, the misunderstanding was wiped away, they married, they had two lovely children, and they lived happily ever after.

This was the first of my "up from the gutter" serials. My second allowed the heroine to be seduced by the head gangster of her tough neighborhood. When she knew that she was to become a mother, she went to a "bad woman" for advice. The "bad woman" begged her with tears in her eyes not to murder her unborn child, and hinted at her own tragedy having come from that. The heroine forced the gangster at the point of the pistol to marry her. Then she left him and started to build life over again. After the birth of her baby, while she was struggling along, happy in the sweetness of mother love, she met an artist who painted her in a madonna-like pose, fell in love with her and married her. The former gangster-husband had tried to interfere, but had been followed and shot by a dope-fiend sweetheart who was jealous.

For the above story of three moderately short instalments I received the first prize of a thousand dollars. I was then asked to become a regular member of the writing staff of the magazine at a comfortable salary. I accepted the offer and wrote serial after serial along the same line. Always my heroine was of lowly birth or thrust by circumstances upon a cold world and forced to earn her own living. Always she faced the loss of her honor either by seduction or force or both. Sometimes she yielded. Sometimes she resisted and escaped. Almost always she had a baby or chummed with some unfortunate girl who did have a baby, and became a sort of foster mother. The temptations of love and passion were always portrayed. To yield brought suffering. To resist brought triumph. But when motherhood came, whether accompanied by wifehood or not, it was always treated as a sweet, ennobling experience, and the girl was always able, somehow or other, to win her way back to a position of self-respect and happiness in life. Breaking of the moral code was never justified. But I preached that it was "never too late to mend", and I made the "come-back" just as thrilling and romantic as possible. I almost always had a man with "an understanding heart" come into the story and be generous and unselfish about falling in love with the heroine. I always had her tell him of her past before marrying him. Most of my stories ended with the picture of a happy home and babies present or "on the way".

From the first these confession magazines have been looked upon by those who have a care for the morals of the country as dangerously sensational and bad for young people because of their constant dealing with sex. It has been said that they pander to the lowest instincts of men and women. It has been said that they break down idealism by presenting so many tales of love gone astray through passion. The head of a reformatory for wayward girls has told her subordinates to keep the confession magazines from the girls because they read them only to discover some new sex thrill that they haven't experienced. A certain social investigator has gath-

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ered statistics showing that a certain confession magazine is the favorite reading of most girls between the ages of thirteen and sixteen. The implication is that this is a deplorable state of affairs.

I have the same instinctive feeling about the magazines myself. I don't agree with some people in believing that love and passion and the perpetuation of the race are shameful. There are no sex taboos in my family. My children have had all their questions frankly and accurately and unsentimentally answered as soon as asked. I expect them in due course to feel love and passion and to mate and to reproduce their kind. Yet some conventional streak has caused me to keep the confession magazines that come to me from my publishers out of the way as much as possible, and to keep my friends and business associates from knowing that I write for them. I dislike reading them, myself. In fact I never read them. They depress me. This is a personal confession of my own.

I have often asked myself why I have continued to write for the confession magazines if I feel this way about them. Why do I do something that I am ashamed to have known? There are two possible answers. One is that I have found it possible to make twice or three times as much money on the side as I earn in regular salary. I have been able to keep my family associating with cultured and educated people, having the good things of life. But would I have done this if I had felt that I was injuring the youth of our land by my stories? I hope not.

The other answer is that while I am not sure that the total effect of the confession magazine is a good one, neither am I sure that it is a bad one; and I am very sure that I have never written a story that was not motivated by idealism, or in which immorality was glorified. I have written no story that I would object to having my own son or daughter read during adolescence. I feel that, if anything, it does the young girl who reads a confession magazine good to find one of my stories in it. Therefore, though I keep my connection with the magazines secret, I am honestly not ashamed of what I have been doing.

Right here I am going to quote a letter that I received from a woman in Los Angeles who had read one of my stories, and who believed it to be true. I suppose it is fair to assume that many other women have been similarly affected. Here is the letter:

To the Authoress of
"That Brat of Mabel's"
Kind friend:—

I wish I could find words to express my appreciation of your wonderful life story; it will ever be an inspiration to me throughout my life, I know, to live more unselfishly and to love my neighbor more truly.

I have read the —— magazine for about two years, and its stories have been very helpful as well as entertaining; but yours thrilled me beyond words and often it was so touching because of the grandeur of some of its characters, that I found myself in tears.

Truly God moves in mysterious ways His wonders to perform, for though you were materially poor, you were spiritually rich and from the depths you rose to such wondrous heights. How wonderfully God blessed you when he instilled into your being that strong mother love which has blessed, and will continue to bless, the world; also your ability to write stories which will ever be an inspiration to your readers to live nobler, better lives. Because of my love for reading, I feel that I would rather be an author than a singer or possess any other of God's wonderful gifts, for I believe an author has the most influence over the lives of mankind.

Please accept my heartfelt thanks and give my kindest regards and best wishes to your lovely family and if ever you have any time to spare, I would greatly appreciate a personal word from you.

Sincerely,

———

That letter made me want to weep, myself. It seemed terrible that I could have so completely fooled that woman. I felt like a cheat; but almost immediately I realized that she

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was better off for believing in the truth of my story and the nobility of my "mother love". I decided that I could not answer her letter; and it remains unanswered to this day. Many a time it has bolstered me up in my decision to keep on writing bogus confessions of an idealistic nature.

This brings me to a question that is asked of me by every person who learns of my connection with confession magazines. They want to know if the confessions are true. Some of them are and some of them are not. I am inclined to think that a great many of the short ones are true and that most of the long ones are fictitious. I know that one of the leaders of this type of magazine refuses to consider publishing a story unless the writer signs an affidavit to the effect that it is based on events in his or her own life or in the life of some person of his or her acquaintance. Such an affidavit, however, allows so much leeway that almost any writer could, by a mere stretch of conscience, sign it with regard to any story that he had written.

On the other hand, it seems to be quite important that the reader should think them true. There is quite a thrill to be had from reading the intimate facts of anybody's life—hearing anybody's confession. Witness the way in which even the most educated and cultured of us devour the scandalous revelations to be found in the reports of trials—murders and divorces and breach-of-promise cases and anything else that causes some poor girl to get on the stand and admit that she had the love of some man who had no legal right to love her. What is there about scandal to make it so widely read? Is it because everybody is more or less irked by the barriers that society has put around love? Are people having their own adventures thus vicariously? I don't know, but I do know that many who would not read similar stories published in fiction magazines do read them in the newspapers, where they believe them to be true. So I have found it necessary to write in a rambling, inconsequential style at times, and to put in occasional details that have nothing to do with the story just to make it seem true.

One of the confession magazines has made a great deal out of the old saying, "Truth is stranger than fiction". It isn't. I know a man who has lived through a love-tangle that would make sensational reading in court proceedings. It is absolutely true, but so far from normal life that it has no message of vital truth in it. He could never sell it as a confession. It isn't true enough!

I believe that the really true life story is the most worth while, if told properly. The trouble is that most of the people who have really "lived" either won't tell their stories, or don't know how to do so. Recently, however, I tried to get such a story across as a serial. It came about in this manner. One of the big confession magazines advertised a prize contest. What they wanted was a true outline which their staff writers could fill in. They received between two and three thousand entries. Some of them were typewritten, but most of them were written by hand, many in pencil on the kind of paper that you can buy in a thick pad for five or ten cents at a stationery store. Not one out of a hundred was in literary form. Some of them had no paragraphs. Some had no periods. Some were so misspelled that it was hard to know what the writer was trying to say. They were a pitiful set of documents.

It happened that I had once been a staff serial writer for this magazine. I had left because they were overstocked with serials of the fictional type and were going to use only those that were based on fact. They asked me to act as judge in the prize contest and I agreed. It was an experience!

A few were obvious fakes. A good many had been doctored and dramatized. But eight out of ten bore every mark of reality; and they were the ones that gripped my attention. Though I had done a long day's work, I would come home each night and read these crude confessions one after another for three

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or four hours, and I never came to hate the job. The reality, the sense of actually looking into somebody's inner heart, had a pull to it that is hard to describe.

But, seen even in the large this way, Truth did not prove to be stranger than Fiction. In fact Truth proved itself to be very commonplace and drab in spite of the peculiar fascination about it. The stories began to seem to run in a mould. The heroine almost always began life in poverty with a faulty home life. She had a cruel father or a cruel mother, one or both of whom drank; or her parents or guardians were well-meaning, but strict and very much opposed to her having anything to do with young men, or even going to parties. Generally she had been brought up in gross ignorance of the facts of sex. She was unhappy at home, looked upon young men as forbidden fruit and therefore to be longed for and to be used as a way out of her unhappy home problem; but always she knew nothing of the meaning of marriage.

Mating was always the next step. If mating occurred without marriage, the problem of unmarried motherhood had to be faced. Generally the girl concealed her condition as long as possible from her parents. Often she and the man talked it over with fear on her part and anger on his. Frequently he suggested medicine to get rid of the child. It never worked, for the girl always resolved to go through with her ordeal. Generally she was scolded and bitterly reproached. Sometimes she stayed at home, and had her baby. Sometimes she went to live with relatives. Sometimes she went to a distant town and did housework. Occasionally she went to a home for unmarried mothers. When her baby was born she always refused to give it up, and got happiness out of her love.

The next stage to be considered was marriage. There was always a man who wanted the girl, baby or no baby. Sometimes she married him coldly, just for the home he would provide for her and her child. Sometimes he courted her in proper style. Very seldom was there any real love on either side. The marriage was rarely happy, no matter how it came about. The man treated the girl well enough during the honeymoon. After that he began to neglect her, to stay out with men, gambling, drinking and finally going with other women. The time came when the girl could stand it no longer. She left her husband and started in to fight for a living for herself and child or children.

This period of independent struggle was generally a very hard one, accompanied by offers that shamed her. She almost always refused them. Usually her husband sought her out and asked her to take him back. They often tried it again for a while, and again came to unhappiness and separation. After this one of three things happened. The woman took her husband back a second time and they came to some sort of working and living agreement; she managed to struggle along independently with the help of her growing children; or she found a man who really would be good to her, divorced her first husband, and married him. Frequently she was happy after this. But at times her troubles started all over again.

Most of the stories ended when the heroine had reached the age of fifty or thereabouts, and had become used to the only personal problem left to her—the problem of living. She was thinking hopefully of the happiness in life of some one of her grown children, or was being called upon for help by her children at times of sickness and when grandchildren were being born. In a way she was happy.

There we have it, the formula of the real life story of the masses. This is not like the formula on which I started writing my confession stories. It is perhaps basically the same, but it lacks the optimism, and the romance. Sex and Success made the right formula. Troubles ended with the marriage of the heroine while still young. She was beginning to "live happily ever after" with her babies. Life's own formula, however, seemed to be

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different. It was Sex and Failure, followed by a long struggle up to the point of just about breaking even.

This composite mass story of human life got me by the throat. I wanted to tell it because I knew that none of these drab outlines would ever get into print. It was only the sensational stories that would be accepted. Yet this real, composite-type heroine was knocking at the door of the confession magazine to get a hearing. Accordingly, after I had finished reading all the outlines, I sat down to serialize the life story of that composite heroine. I listened to the echoes of those hundreds of pathetic tales, and I wrote them down in the same crude manner in which they had been told. It was no plagiarism, no literary theft. I used no plots, no details that had been written in by individuals. I wrote my story in the composite mould. I felt that I had done a pretty fair job. I had shown life as it was for these girls. But the story was a flat failure. The head editor of the company for which I was working said, "Yes, you've done just what you set out to do. The story is real. It is drab. It is heart-rending. But the characters are just types. The story doesn't lift the reader out of the ordinary. Its drabness kills it. You'll have to try something else".

The moral of which is that Truth *has to be* stranger than Fiction. That part of the old formula which is not of universal experience —Success—is as vital as the part which *is* of universal experience—Sex. It is the combination of the two that makes the winning confession story, just as my old friend the editor had told me when he started me out on my career as a confessor.

That word, confessor, brings me to another thing that developed out of reading those seven hundred confession outlines. I became a sort of father confessor to about a dozen of the women who wrote their life stories. While doing the reading, as I have said, I became impressed more and more with the grip that the really true life stories had on me. Fictionized outlines did not carry with them the personalities of the writers. It was the clumsy wordings, the crude sincerities, that made the stories carry across. So I wrote to the publisher for whom I was reading and told him not to have his staff writers write up these outlines but to have me get in touch with some of the women and help them write them out in their own words. The publisher accepted my suggestion in part, and for about eight months I did practically nothing but probe into the hearts of these women and help them get their emotional experiences down on paper. No other literary work that I have ever done has been quite so interesting.

I wish I could tell some of those confessions right here; but they were for publication, and that publication has not yet come to pass, so I cannot. Perhaps it will do no harm if I just mention one or two interesting points. One girl, for instance, had let herself become a gold digger, but guarded her "honor" technically and never "paid" for the presents received. She was arrested in a raid on a road house, dining with a respected judge. The judge escaped, and the next day he found himself forced by the activities of a Women's Clean-Up Committee to sentence the girl to a year in the reformatory. What happened from that point on made up the story.

Another girl started life in a state school for girls, married one of the men teachers, found him a beast, fell in love with a married doctor, was his unrestrained sweetheart, and got her first real happiness in life through that illegal union and the children that resulted from it. A bad tangle resulted; but the woman clung to ideals of her own making, brought up her children properly, and is now living a respected, reasonably happy life.

Still another girl shot one husband for infidelity, was helped through her trial by funds which she paid for by living in a house of ill repute as an object of curiosity because of her notoriety, was protected there from harm by the owner of the house who was an old chum, later divorced still another husband, and lived

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for twelve years faithfully with a man who was married to a woman who did not love him but had borne him children. This man eventually tried to murder her in a fit of drunken jealousy. You would think this girl would be a wreck. But she has started life all over again, and is gradually making good in a new community.

The last girl that I want to mention is one forced into prostitution by her husband, under the threat of losing her baby. She plied her trade numbly in New York and elsewhere for several years, smoked opium in Chinese joints, fought that off, married a man who had first paid her the regular toll, mothered his half-grown son, got back her own baby, and is now a person of importance in an organization for the reclamation of fallen girls.

These women talked to me and wrote to me. I believe that their stories are going to make good reading, and that they are going to be productive of good. Helping them to piece out the details of their emotional and spiritual struggles, aiding them to make up their minds as to moral values in their lives so that their stories may benefit others has been a really inspiring experience to me. If I could go on being that kind of writer, I should like to continue in the profession.

I confess that I have no more zest for fake confessions.

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THE LITERARY PROPHETS

by Norman Foerster

Here the theme is creative and has vista.
—*Walt Whitman*

WHILE usually restricting himself in his common-sense way to the news and interpretation of the present, as we saw in "The Literary Historians" (July), Mr. Canby often has in mind "the probable course of evolution" and on one occasion ventures to assert that "Criticism is prophecy implied or direct". Yet on the whole he leaves to others that fascinated gaze into the future which he terms, in telephonic idiom, long-distance prophecy. Historical criticism becomes long-distance prophecy in the writings of such men as Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, and Lewis Mumford, who, even when dealing with the past and the present, are never historians in the ordinary sense, but idealists viewing past and present in the light of a fairer future. They are not the scholars nor the reporters, but the adventurers of Time. They display a fine romantic hatred of convention, whether that of the dull practical life established by the pioneers or the equally dull genteel tradition supported by the professors. They enjoy an enthusiasm like that kindled by the war in a few imaginative professors who cried: "All may be prophets now, for the air is electric with the promise of the new world that is to come from this travail of nations. America never again can be what she was before 1914. A new future opens, and today we demand with Whitman a school of prophets, seers, poets, interpreters of the new vision of America among the nations". Their chief ancestor, indeed, is Walt Whitman, whose romantic nationalism and utopianism they repeat in terms sobered by the scientific environmentalism of the school of Taine.

II

The leader of this group of national culturists, as they might be termed, was Randolph Bourne, whose untimely death at the age of thirty-two almost made of him a spiritual symbol. In turn of mind he was not wholly unlike some of the self-appointed statesmen of the war, such as Henry Ford, who was reported as saying, "I don't read history. That's in the past. I'm thinking of the future". Bourne was always thinking of the future, dreaming the long, long thoughts of youth, ardent to band Young America in a phalanx that should lead the way to a rational society. In the words of his admirer Mr. Brooks, he gave himself to a "beautiful desire . . . for a new fellowship in the youth of America as the principle of a great and revolutionary departure in our life, a league of youth, one might call it, consciously framed with the purpose of creating, out of the blind chaos of American society, a fine, free, articulate cultural order. . . . *Place aux jeunes* might have been his motto: he seemed indeed the flying wedge of the younger generation itself. . . . He was a wanderer, the child of some nation yet unborn, smitten with an inappeasable nostalgia for the Beloved Com-

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munity on the far side of socialism". That this beautiful desire sprang up in him before the war is proved by a charmingly immature book published in 1913, *Youth and Life*, in which he announced in the brave accent of the poets of Vagabondia, "It is the glory of the present age that in it one can be young. . . . A muddle of a world and a wide outlook combine to inspire us to the bravest of radicalisms". In it were chapters on "The Adventure of Life", "The Experimental Life", "The Dodging of Pressures" (conventions), and "On Radicals". In chapters bearing on science and religion he drew light from such writers of the day as Maeterlinck and Burroughs, and from Walt Whitman. For him science "brings us only to an 'area of our dwelling', as Whitman says. The moral adventure of the rising generation will be to learn this truth thoroughly, and to reinstate ideals and personality at the heart of the world".

Today Bourne is known, when known at all, mainly through a posthumous volume edited by Mr. Brooks, *History of a Literary Radical and Other Essays* (1920), composed of papers already published in periodicals. In the title essay Bourne tells of his reaction against the professors ("The professors knew some history, but what did that history mean?"); of his emancipation by a lecturer who came to the village, a literary radical albeit a professor, William Lyon Phelps; of his humanitarian passion for "social purpose"; of his increasing clearness of outlook in the years following college and an architectural course; and particularly of his perception of the need of critics intent not upon "crusades against puritanism and philistinism" but upon "a constructive pointing of the way". In another essay, taking as a point of departure the vicious effects in America of Matthew Arnold's conception of culture, he describes in vigorous language "Our Cultural Humility". Misguided young Americans of talent went the way of Henry James and the bourgeoisie imitated them as best they might. But this humility, this parasitic attraction to the civilizations of Europe, he declares is "the chief obstacle which prevents us from producing any true indigenous culture of our own. I am far from saying, of course, that it is not necessary for our arts to be fertilized by the civilizations of other nations past and present. The culture of Europe has arisen only from such an extensive cross-fertilization in the past. But we have passed through that period of learning, and it is time for us now to set up our individual standards". It is time for us now, he goes on, to cultivate "a new American nationalism", based upon "the beauties and vitalities and sincerities of our own life and ideals". We are now ready to stride forward in the spirit that animated MacDowell in music, James in philosophy, and Walt Whitman in poetry. We are now ready to "shut ourselves in with our own genius" and to "express the soul of this hot chaos of America".

III

The ardent confusion of Bourne became a thoughtful earnestness in his disciple Van Wyck Brooks, who attracted much attention in the decade 1915-1925 through a succession of studies of the malady and the promise of American letters: *America's Coming-of-Age* (1915), *Letters and Leadership* (1918), *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* (1919), and *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* (1925). It will suffice to consider here only the first of these books, which reached a second printing in 1924 and is probably the most original and influential of the series.

The germ of *America's Coming-of-Age* lies in a sentence quoted from Emerson: "Our people have their intellectual culture from one country and their duties from another". The American people, as Mr. Brooks conceives, are Highbrows and Lowbrows, drifting chaotically between the two extremes of desiccated culture and stark utility, powerless to effect that organic reconciliation of theory and practice which would turn their life into

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a "disinterested adventure". The absorbing adventure of business is only the habitual prolongation of an impulse legitimate in the age of pioneering but now become a vicious anachronism. The prevailing class, having attained relative economic freedom, can find no outlet for personality save by continuing its economic self-assertion and spending its wealth in "doing what everybody else does, and doing it as much more so as possible". In simple truth it appears that "economic self-assertion still remains to most Americans a sort of moral obligation; while self-fulfilment still looks like a pretty word for selfishness". Self-fulfilment, of a sort, there was in that Golden Age when we produced Emerson, Lowell, Holmes, Whittier, and the rest of Our Poets, who reflected a certain coherence and ripeness in our culture. Yet the vague idealism of the American people was never allowed to interfere with practical life. Not one of the New England writers was able "to move the soul of America from the accumulation of dollars"—not even Emerson, the saintly and the shrewd, the voice of German transcendental idealism and of American pioneer enterprise. "For if the logical result of a thorough-going, self-reliant individualism in the world of the spirit is to become a saint, it is no less true that the logical result of a thorough-going, self-reliant individualism in the world of the flesh is to become a millionaire." In Lowell, it may seem, the elements of personality were richer and better fused; yet he, of all our writers, was farthest from self-fulfilment "because his culture is European without the corresponding pressure and responsibility of the European mind". With the passing of Lowell and Emerson and the rest, that innocent old America came to an end, and a new and chaotic America—the hot chaos of Bourne—soon took its place. Self-fulfilment, as a social ideal, is still to seek.

That ideal is the opposite of our economic self-assertion. We must act upon our knowledge that a relative competence in worldly goods satisfies the person who is primarily and sincerely aiming at "the fulfilling of his own creative instincts"—the working out of his own personality in terms of activity artistic, religious, and literary. Rightly viewed, these forms of activity are not, like self-assertion in the practical realm, selfish, but in the best sense social, essentially disinterested. Yet they will always be thwarted unless they are also social in the sense that they pervade society, since "the individual whose personal end varies too greatly from the end of the mass of men about him not only suffers acutely and becomes abnormal, he actually cannot accomplish anything healthily fine at all. . . . The mind is a flower that has an organic connection with the soil it springs from". Once this creative ideal prevailed, it would close up the violent antinomy that cleaves asunder American society—on the one hand the largely feminine public devoted to theory and culture and Maeterlinck, on the other the largely masculine public devoted to action and business and the dollar. At present our two publics are, "in biological phrase, infertile with one another".

One sound clue to self-realization we possess in a poet capable of mediating between the two American publics—Walt Whitman. He it was who first revealed to us something organic in our life, linking the cloud-castles of Emerson, Hawthorne and Poe to the solid earth. "Himself a great vegetable of a man," he had nearly as large a power of gathering human experience as Ulysses of old. "Whitman—how else can I express it?—precipitated the American character. All those things which had been separate, self-sufficient, incoordinate—action, theory, idealism, business—he cast into a crucible; and they emerged, harmonious and molten, in a fresh democratic ideal, which is based on the whole personality." He was the focal center for America, as Virgil for Rome. And he points the way for us to attain a place in the sun really worth having. Are we not to take the raw materials of his social ideal, which he

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shaped in the form of emotion, and reshape them, as he failed to do, in the form of guiding ideas?

If Van Wyck Brooks leaves his high theme at this point, it is partly because of his earnest modesty, which suggests to him that "the formulation of a social ideal can only be the work of a wiser head and a riper heart than we have yet seen". In 1915 he was, indeed, but twenty-nine years old, scarcely ready to make good Whitman's shortcomings in the realm of ideas. Yet he has never since become ready. As one of his disciples, Waldo Frank, has pointed out, the author of *America's Coming-of-Age* soon appeared to be "flinching from the way of which he was the intellectual leader. *The Ordeal of Mark Twain* reveals the defeatist note. His distortions of portraiture no longer have the dynamic end of recreating our literary figures into forces for an American ethos: more and more, they become rationales of failure. With *The Pilgrimage of Henry James* a petulant delight in pain comes into his writings. The still later study of Emerson is a mere sentimental retrospect". One remembers his own phrase, "The mind is a flower", and the delicate flowers that bloomed in the efflorescence of Romanticism, when Chatterton was a symbol of the poet in conflict with society. Perhaps Mr. Brooks himself remembers the romantics when he somewhere remarks that "to feel oneself a 'victim' is in itself not to be an artist, for it is the nature of the artist to live, not in the world of which he is an effect, but in the world of which he is the cause". But while Mr. Brooks has often analyzed the American artist as effect, he has never pictured the American artist as cause. Why is it that his doctrine of the free creative life is paralyzed by a prevailing mood of wistfulness and futility?

In quest of an answer, let us return to "the professors", who are mentioned in the first sentence of *America's Coming-of-Age* and are never afterward out of mind. The professors conceive that literature is a thing of the past; they want that creative spirit which is appropriate to literary studies and essential in the ideal of self-fulfilment. Mr. Brooks deals with them in a more sustained manner in one of the best-known of his later essays, a contribution to the *Dial* in 1918, "On Creating a Usable Past". While the anarchy of American life and letters increases, the professors, apparently in complete indifference, "continue to pour out a stream of historical works repeating the same points of view to such an astonishing degree that they have placed a sort of Talmudic seal upon the American tradition". Victims of their environment and training, they interpret all learning with reference not to the creative but to the practical life; passively submitting to the forces that starve the imagination, they fulfil themselves only in "the vicarious world of the dead" and return to the world of the present "in the majestic raiment of borrowed immortalities", disparaging "almost everything that comes out of the contemporary mind". Instead of fertilizing the present, they take a pathological delight in shaming the present by the example of the past. As a preparation for "the reinterpretation of our literature" Mr. Brooks accordingly welcomes "the reinterpretation of our professors that now goes merrily forward". European professors, suffering less from inhibitions, viewing the past through the spectacles of their own intellectual freedom, lay before the practising author a more available body of inherited experience. For a more usable American past, we shall have to rely upon the historical enterprise of our younger generation. Theirs it must be to select, from an inexhaustible storehouse of inherited experience, attitudes and ideals really pertinent to our needs today; theirs it must be to *create* a usable past. They will recall that Sainte-Beuve, when Arnold objected that Lamartine was not an important writer, rejoined, "Perhaps not, but he is important *for us*". They will ask, first of all, *What is important for us?* And this will turn their attention from the obvious masterpieces of

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American literature to the "tendencies" that explain our failures. "Why did Ambrose Bierce go wrong? Why did Stephen Crane fail to acclimatize the modern method in fiction twenty years ago? What became of Herman Melville?" Would not answers to a "hundred and one questions of this sort" enable us to "throw an entirely new face not only over the past but over the present and the future also"? Would not understanding of the obstacles met by our writers in the past link us in brotherhood with those writers and thus offer a basis for "a national culture"?

Yet surely, as a prophet of a national culture, Mr. Brooks does not carry us very far. He is not much more creative than the professors. The task he proposes belongs, as he acknowledges, to the literary historian. Defeated in his efforts at constructive prophecy, he turns to the past; and he turns to the past, not for permanent values essential for a reconstruction, as the humanist does, but merely for explanation of tendencies, as the historical professor does. He too wants to be an historical professor, only a really good one.

In this aim, he has no choice. For if American literary history is a matter of "historic destiny", and if the professorial mind is likewise "historically predestined", and if the same is true, as he tells us, of the revolt of the younger generation against the professors, so is it true, presumably, of his own mission to lead that revolt toward a more penetrating mode of research. Longing for a better literature in the future, he urges a reinterpretation of American literature in the past. He has the usual academic preoccupation with conditions and tendencies, with concepts of nationality and history, with the relativities of place and time, along with the usual academic atrophy of the higher critical faculty by a deterministic view of life. *America's Coming-of-Age* draws to a close not with a call for courage and energy, but with a rueful admission that "to be a sheer determinist is in all probability to have behind one the authority of the intellect", wherefore the best that men can do is to convince themselves that "what nature wills is what they will", as "one of the greatest of determinists", Walt Whitman, understood: "All forces have been steadily employed to complete and delight me". It is a limp faith. What a faith more strenuous might have done for Mr. Brooks can only be imagined.

IV

Several years before the publication of *America's Coming-of-Age*, a youth of seventeen named Lewis Mumford, a son of Whitman's fish-shaped Paumanok, planned a book on utopias. Though Mr. Mumford does not indicate how he came upon the idea, he acknowledges that he would perhaps never have either started or finished writing the book but for the encouragement of Van Wyck Brooks. *The Story of Utopias*, published in 1922, expresses the post-war disillusion with the present, looks with hope into the future, and yet, significantly, is in the main a history of the utopias of the past, from Plato's *Republic* onward. The author distinguishes two types: utopias of escape or compensation, and utopias of reconstruction. Utopias of escape are aimless, leaving the external world unchanged; utopias of reconstruction are purposive, seeking to shape the world to the heart's desire. In a concluding chapter he calls for a reconstruction of our twentieth-century world, beginning with our inner world. Owing to the disintegration of our idola, "our mental world will soon be as empty of useful furniture as a deserted house". He finds no cheer in the reformers and revolutionaries, because of "their lack of any fundamental program and their inability to conceive an essential reorientation in modern society". His own effort in this direction, however, is sketched in only a few pages and is obviously futile: the basis of the new order should be the elements of "consensus among all utopian writers" and its con-

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ditions should be the "limitations of each region" and the "driving force of history".

In his next two books Mr. Mumford, instead of working out a fundamental program, studied the conditions of Utopia in a definite region and time of history—America and her brief past. In the first, *Sticks and Stones* (1924), he found an index of American life in our architecture; in the second, *The Golden Day* (1926), in our imaginative literature and philosophy. Since they are closely parallel in thought and the second book is far superior in firmness of conception and harmony of style, we may here limit ourselves to *The Golden Day*.

The keynote of this suggestive work of historical interpretation is struck in the first sentence: "The settlement of America had its origins in the unsettlement of Europe"—i.e., in the break-up of medieval culture. The end of one culture and the beginning of another may be symbolized by the belfries and campaniles that began to be erected all over Europe in the thirteenth century; "the bells tolled, and the idea of time, or rather, temporality, resumed its hold over men's minds". By the fifteenth century new devices in map-making rendered it possible for even ordinary men to travel to distant lands. "The bells tolled, and the ships set sail"; "time and space took possession of the European's mind." Later, Protestantism, commercial expansion, and science; still later, the industrial revolution, political democracy, and utilitarianism carried forward the externalization of human interests. In America, the European was turned into a barbarian by pioneering, a romanticism of action. "The vast gap between the hope of the Romantic Movement and the reality of the pioneer period is one of the most sardonic jests of history. On one side, the bucolic innocence of the eighteenth century, its belief in a fresh start, and its attempt to achieve a new culture. And over against it, the epic march of the covered wagon, leaving behind it deserted villages, bleak cities, depleted soils, and the sick and exhausted souls that engraved their epitaphs in Mr. Masters's *Spoon River Anthology*." Instead of leading to a new culture, the break-up of medieval culture finally produced that dehumanized, mechanistic civilization in which we now live.

But there was one golden day—Mr. Brooks's Golden Age of New England. There the inherited medieval civilization had indeed become a shell, "but, drying up, it left behind a sweet acrid aroma, and for a brief day it had a more intense existence in the spirit. Before the life itself collapsed, men felt the full weight of it in their imagination. In the act of passing away, the Puritan begot the Transcendentalist, and the will-to-power . . . gave way to the will-to-perfection". At least "they fathomed the possibilities, these Americans, of a modern basis for culture". The leader of these minds, the Morning Star of the Golden Day, was Emerson, who summed up all that was salutary in the experience of America when he wrote in the frontier accent, "People wish to be settled: only as far as they are unsettled is there any hope for them". His challenge was met by Thoreau, the Dawn of the new day, who made a resolute attempt at self-fulfilment, and by Whitman, its High Noon.

Walt Whitman becomes the hero of this historical novel. In him the New England culture produced "poetry of the first rank", poetry indeed that belongs to "sacred literature". He it was who most fully realized a fatal lack in the humanistic and religious traditions from which the Romantic Movement had cut loose, a lack, in his own words, of "the invisible roots, the profoundest meanings, of a place, race, or nationality". Immersing himself in his environment "Whitman absorbed so much of the America about him, that he is more than a single writer: he is almost a literature". Whereas Longfellow could be removed from our heritage without altering in the least the "possibility of American life", the removal of Whitman would result in an impoverishment of our

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resources, inasmuch as he "created a new pattern of experience and character". Unhappily, we have made scant use of that pattern: "the work he conceived still remains to be done: the America he evoked does not as yet exist". That is why Mr. Mumford must write his book.

The remainder of the argument I must summarize in few words. After Whitman comes the Twilight of Hawthorne and Melville, then the Civil War and its train of consequences making for a blatant industrialism instead of a finer culture. Each of the literary figures of the post-bellum period was more or less frustrated; Mark Twain, Bierce, Howells, Henry James, William James, all are the fragments of a man, till at length Mr. Dreiser illustrates only too plainly "the bewildered chaos of the sons of the pioneer". If Transcendentalism, as Emerson said, had resulted in a headache, the pragmatism of the ensuing period brought on a paralysis. A writer must either, like Henry James, flee from this pragmatic environment, or, like his brother William, accept it and glorify it. Culture itself, to this practical America after the war, became acquisitive and predatory—not something based upon experience, but something that might be purchased by those who have the means, like Mrs. Jack Gardner's palace in Boston. Our own generation, even more than the disabled generation following the Civil War, is pathetically impotent in the creative life.

Like Van Wyck Brooks, Mr. Mumford has written a fresh and thoughtful study in literary history viewed against a background of general history. Like Mr. Brooks, and unlike the usual academic historian, he is always thinking of the future, even though he says little of it till he reaches his "Envoi". And here his vision, like Mr. Brooks's, wavers uneasily between a deterministic respect for *forces* and a pioneering zest for free *adventure*. Sometimes he announces, after the manner of those spiritual pioneers, the Trancendentalists, that "man is not merely a poor creature, wryly adjusting himself to external circumstances: he is also a creator, an artist, making circumstances conform to the aims and necessities he himself freely imposes; that the incomparable "adventure our generation may know" is to create, in lieu of the Machine philosophy since Descartes, a philosophy oriented towards Life—nothing less than "to conceive a new world. *'Allons! the road is before us!'*"* At other times Mr. Mumford, as a son of Taine, is impressed, rather, with "the forces that have come over from the past", "the forces that are now dominant", "the forces . . . at large in the world". At such times, naturally, the task of the critic is not so much to create a new world as to arrive at a "prophecy of a new stream of tendency". Yet it can scarcely be said that Mr. Mumford ever arrives at any definite prophecy or describes the prospect that makes him feel adventurous. Looking into the future "tenderly, wistfully, impotently", "all dressed up, with no place to go" (as he says of instrumentalism), he might just as well have ended his book with the disconsolate cry: *"Impasse! the road is closed!"*

For a careful reading of his book shows, I think, that the forces make the adventuring delusive and purposeful foresight impossible. At bottom, creative thought turns out to be receptive thought, its mission being merely to gather "all the living sources of its day" and express them. The important thing for a writer is not a certain independence from time and place (those two factors in experience that brought on pioneering and pragmatism) but a full absorption, like Whitman's, of the vital forces of his own time and place. All the leading writers of the Golden Age had an adventurous spirit which, paradoxically enough, illustrates this dependence: "that the past was merely provisional, and that the future might

* This slogan—the last words of the book—is fittingly repeated from Walt Whitman. In a later book, *Herman Melville* (1929), Whitman and Melville are presented as our two leaders, "Whitman with his cosmic faith and Melville in his cosmic defiance." Fused into one, they will guide us to a splendid future (p. 364).

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be formed afresh were two patent generalizations which they drew directly from their environment". John Dewey's philosophy of experimentalism, similarly indebted, "expresses . . . American experience". The prevailing thought of Mr. Mumford appears to be that, in the relation of the individual to his time and place—"the perpetual intercourse between the organism and its environment"—the formative agent is the time-and-place not the individual, the environment not the organism. His most insistent questions are always biological: What recent forces are still vigorously *alive*? What new forces are gaining in *vitality*? His most insistent fear that of a culture which is "pressed flowers" instead of a "living plant".

This accounts for his covert attacks upon the humanists, those "academic philosophers, whose chief glory it is to make bread out of straw", who ignore the life round them in their revival of cultural values that are moribund or obsolete, and who ought to bestow their encomiums forever upon William Dean Howells, faithful observer of the "inner check". Mr. Mumford does not think much of the doctrine of the inner check: "Sooner throttle a babe in its cradle than nurse an unacted desire", he rejoins with William Blake. There are limits, to be sure, to his taste for sheer vitality, since he cannot stomach Theodore Dreiser's indifference to "direction or purpose or humane standards", but he is plainly hostile to the particular direction, purpose, and standards of the group of critics called humanists, who exclude not only the realists and naturalists but also the romanticists with whom Mr. Mumford is deeply allied. Indeed, the humanists "wage war upon all the living forces of the last century"; they are not "in living relation to the important issues of their time", as Whitman and Taine were; they are not even aware that Walt Whitman himself was "a far better humanist" than Irving Babbitt. Like an orthodox romanticist, Mr. Mumford condemns the humanists for "their fear of 'expansiveness', their distrust of spiritual audacity, their high regard for correctness, their curious belief in restraint as the ultimate ethical principle" —qualities which he ascribes, in conformity with the deterministic side of his theory, to their "academic environment". But Mr. Mumford himself has for a number of years been part of the academic environment: his books have been admired by many instructors and young writers in the colleges, as well as by earnest minds outside, and I think it could be shown that his work in the third decade of the twentieth century contributed not a little to the strength of the humanist position at the beginning of the fourth decade. For, on the one hand, he has argued well the need of a humanistic reconstruction; and on the other, he has failed to offer any tangible reconstruction which might rival that of the humanists.

Like the humanists, he points out that we can escape from the sterility and despair of our contemporary world only by "reformulating a more vital tissue of ideas and symbols to supplant . . . the abstract framework of ideas which we have used, in lieu of a full culture, these last few centuries". Science has achieved its astonishing results "by treating men's central interests and desires as negligible, ignoring the fact that science itself was but a mode of man's activity as a living creature, and that its effort to cancel out the human element was only a very ingenious human expedient". Though itself an instrument of man's humanism, science has a point of view sharply contrasting with that of humanism. "In the *Phaedrus*," the author of *The Story of Utopias* reminds us, "Socrates had expressed the humanist outlook by saying: 'Trees and fields, you know, cannot teach me anything, but men in the city can'." The shortest way of describing the attitude of science is to say that it resolutely turned its back on men in the city and devoted itself to the trees and fields and stars and the rest of brute nature. If it paid attention to men at all it saw them—if we may abuse an old quotation—"as trees walking." Far from shar-

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ing "the scientific distrust of 'values'", far from resting content with a humanitarian "diffusion of existing values", Mr. Mumford presents himself as the champion of higher values than those of the present—values to be created in the future with the help of the past. This he makes clearest, perhaps, in a passage in *Sticks and Stones*, where he sums up the task of culture by saying that "the future of our civilization depends upon our ability to select and control our heritage from the past, to alter our present attitudes and habits, and to project fresh forms into which our energies may be freely poured". So far as the past is concerned, this means that we must have that "ability to re-introduce old elements" which "the humanists of the late Middle Ages" displayed when they restored the letters and monuments of Rome and Greece. A reinterpretation of the past is essential if we are to "bring into the foreground those things that have been left out of the current scheme of life and thought". Both Mr. Mumford and Mr. Brooks agree with their humanist contemporaries in insisting upon the quest of a usable past, even if they disagree as to what past is usable.

Through a creative use of the past we may transcend the limits of the present and approximate a "complete and symmetrical life". Here again Mr. Mumford is fully in accord with the humanists, though less explicit than they in regard to the elements of such a life —less explicit, indeed, than the Victorian humanist Arnold, whose *Culture and Anarchy* is the prototype of *Sticks and Stones* and *The Golden Day*. A narrow scrutiny of the ideal of completeness might have led him to perceive, with the humanists, the need of the complementary ideal of centrality to control and shape the elements entering into completeness, an ideal that Arnold illustrated in his life but that he left nearly meaningless in his account of a capacity for *relating* his "powers of life". Like the humanists, Mr. Mumford urges the search for "the good life", an old phrase that he employs constantly but never in the derisive manner of some of the impressionists; but what he means by it no man can certainly say. Though deploring the "tedious war-cries and the empty party labels" of the humanists, he himself, as a national culturist and adventurous determinist, employs a like number of terms and phrases, including not a few that the humanists have found serviceable, such as *culture, values, experience, completeness, the good life, symmetrical, heritage, humanizing*, more sparingly *humanism* and once only, I think, *humane discipline*. He has helped to accustom the contemporary ear to such terms, and, using them in blurred senses, has left to the humanists the task of bringing them nearer a focus. While commending a flexible response to the pressures of the age and the national genius, he has shown himself capable of asserting, like the humanist who refuses to compromise in respect to first principles, that at times "it is necessary to be as stiff as a ramrod and as dogmatic as a Scotch dominie". In sum, it may be said that Mr. Mumford has contributed not a little spadework "towards a humanist synthesis".

And his associate, Van Wyck Brooks, has done the same. A harsher critic of Our Poets, Mr. Brooks went so far as to tax Whitman with having no ideas and being satisfied to have none: "He was too complacent. He was incapable of discipline and he did not see that discipline is, for Americans, the condition of all forward movement". Instead of inveighing against party-cries, labels, and the like, Mr. Brooks announces: "It may as well be understood that the human race will have catchwords and will not budge without them", the only question being "whether they really *catch* at the bottom of things". He calls upon our critical minds to "formulate new issues that really are issues", issues, that is, lying within our social life and requiring discovery. And once the critic has selected his issues with conviction, he must support them militantly. In a somewhat surprising passage Mr. Brooks declares roundly: "A point of view

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in criticism, criticism in the genuine sense, is a working-plan, a definition of issues, which at once renders it impossible to make one's peace with the world, at once and permanently sets one at odds with the world, inevitably makes the critic a champion and a man of war". To urge the claims of a definite program, as Carlyle, Ruskin, Mazzini, Taine, and Nietzsche did, is no less than "the condition of life in the intellectual and moral world".

Pursuing this unexpected turn given to the doctrine of Vitality, we may well doubt whether Mr. Brooks and Mr. Mumford have themselves fulfilled the condition of life. They have never championed a definite program, though it is plain that they are at odds with the world. Making society responsible for the creative impotence of artists and critics, they sometimes seem well content to *dream* like Thoreau (as described by Mr. Mumford) the vision of a whole human life, or to long to swoon away like Emerson (as described by Mr. Brooks), who "felt as if he had drunk the soma-juice with the morning-moving deities of the Rig-Veda, as if life were all an eternal resource and a long tomorrow". At other times their wistfulness takes the more active form of romantic adventure. "Allah," says Mr. Brooks, "never counted the time the Arab spent in the chase." "*'Allons!'*" cries Mr. Mumford, "'the road is before us'"—the road that invites the American caravan into the desert.

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SWINBURNE: THAUMATURGIST

by John Macy

It is related that somebody asked Swinburne which English poets had the finest sense of rhythm and melody and that he replied: "Marlowe, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Shelley—and I". It may be that he added other names that come before him, and whoever will may add more; one thing is certain: no man with an ear sensitive to the music of English words will reject him or fail to applaud his superb confidence in his power. He knew that he was a great poet and said so, and he must have been aware that he was great in a new and original way. Such self-respecting and justifiable egotism in a man of genius is admirable, delightful; in a lesser man it would be ridiculous and offensive. It is fitting that the sequence of poets should begin with Marlowe. For Swinburne is a child of the Elizabethans of more evidently direct lineage than any other poet of his century. His first pieces, *Rosamond* and *The Queen Mother*, published when he was twenty-four, are of an audacious precocity and are streaked with golden phrases not unworthy of the golden age. In a poetic if not in a strictly critical sense his *Atalanta in Calydon* with its Greek pagan spirit may be called his *Hero and Leander*. When he was twenty-nine, the age at which Marlowe died, he startled England with *Poems and Ballads*. The comparison, if we recall the words of that great Elizabethan, Dogberry, need not be pressed too far. Swinburne did not die, but in the forty years more that he lived and abundantly wrote he remained about twenty-nine, always a young god, younger perhaps in the ways of the world than Marlowe.

The first work of some poets, if it is published at all in later editions, is set apart, with a slight suggestion of apology, as "Juvenilia". *Rosamond* and *The Queen Mother* are immature but not juvenile; the golden lines are surrounded by a good deal of pinchbeck rhetoric; much more is imitative, though the imitation is not quite spurious. The poetic command is here at the very beginning; in unmistakable though not high terms it is announced that England has a new poet. The verse has a perfect technical assurance, with none of the first falterings of early numbers; and the Swinburnian idiom, the peculiar note which was to be sounded thousands of times, rings surely in such lines as these from *The Queen Mother:*

> Be quick and dangerous as the fire that rides
> Too fast for thunder . . .

or these from *Chastelard*:

> A bitter beauty, poisonous-pearlèd mouth.
> . . . Ah, fair love,
> Fair fearful Venus made of deadly foam.

This is not great poetry, not yet. But it is a prelude to what is immediately and amazingly to come, when metrical and verbal accomplishment grows suddenly ripe and thought becomes deep and secure.

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That miracle is wrought in *Atalanta in Calydon*; the lyrical necromancer is in full power and reveals all his rich resources, a riotous variety of measures, riotous but under perfect control, opulence of metaphor, lyrical sorcery by which words mean more than they say. This Marlowe of a later century goes to Greece bearing the great gifts of English song, some traditional, some born in him, so uniquely his own that no poet had possessed them in just that form and combination before. And he sought great gifts, the pagan freedom of Greece, which he himself defines in the opening lines of the poem, "To Victor Hugo":

> In the fair days when God
> By man as godlike trod
> And each alike was Greek, alike was free.

For it was not that abstract thing, "the Hellenic spirit", that Swinburne sought and found, but the immediate living contact of gods, men and nature, naked beauty and heaven close to the hills. (It is almost impossible not to be lyrical and rhapsodic in writing about Swinburne after a fresh re-reading of him.) Whether *Atalanta* is thoroughly Greek in substance, in general theme and idea, is a question which may be left to scholars who are profoundly versed in Greek thought and have also some knowledge of English poetry. Professor Mahaffy says that *Atalanta in Calydon* is Æschylean. The legend itself, of the virgin huntress of Arcadia, whose arrow outwings the weapons of the men against the tusked scourge and is rewarded by the king Meleager with the head and hide of the boar for trophy—all that story is not of Swinburne's invention. But he brought to it a novel magic, not only the magic of English poetry (one need not be told that English poetry can do things which Greek cannot do), but his own enchanting idiom, so that the poem is his, an individual creation; and the proof of that is that there was nothing like it before, even in Greek.

Many modern retellings of old tales are little more than direct or indirect translations. Swinburne makes the Atalanta legend a private possession and contributes as much as he takes. To put the matter in a roughly speculative way: if the English poem were rendered into perfect Greek, probably the shade of Æschylus would find it strange. Which is more than saying that modern thought is different from Greek thought even when based upon it—it is rather to say that a new and original poet has dealt with an old theme. For the upshot and glorious result of all such discussion is simply that we have a splendid English poem of prodigal beauty. If the central motive is the contest between the will of man ("The holy spirit of man") and the inexorable gods ("All we are against thee, against thee, O God most high"), and that is a Greek idea, so be it. The question is how much beauty is embroidered upon that basic idea. And Swinburne's embroidery is rich, brilliant and lavish. The verses roll out in vast floods, so sweeping that it sometimes seems that Swinburne himself is caught in the overwhelming rush of his own eloquence. By a glancing calculation, *Atalanta* is at least twice as long as the *Agamemnon* of Æschylus. Perhaps the reason for this difference in sheer bulk is that no modern poet—certainly not Swinburne—is subject to the reputed Greek restraint. Moreover Æschylus is of and for the oral theatre. Swinburne is of the printed page. In all his works in dramatic or quasi-dramatic form he never thought of a playhouse, as did both Browning and Tennyson. His choruses and the speeches of his characters plunge ahead in a wild tumult which would be bewildering but for two things: he is never obscure; line for line his phrasing is clear as still water even though it be churning; and the tedium of prolixity is relieved by his limitless variety of measure, his adroit turn of line; no other poet can do so many things within the compass of a metre which, counted on the fingers, is of such-and-such length and is definitely classified in books on prosody. Swinburne is ex-

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pert in all the rules of prosody, and then he plays with them to suit the pleasures of his ear, but never disintegrates the integrity of English verse—as is the wont of some recent poets who, vainly seeking a freedom which in comparison with Swinburne's freedom is as a Greenwich Village cellar to the open sky, wreck rhythms and affect to find beauty in cacophony.

The choruses in *Atalanta,* with diabolic wizardry (or divine inspiration) cling in the ear and will not be forgotten. The first line or two will recall them:

> When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
> The mother of months in meadow or plain . . .
>
> Before the beginning of years
> There came to the making of man . . .
>
> We have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art goodly, O Love;
> Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.

It will be seen, if criticism cares to reduce noble crystals to a heap of sand, that Swinburne's luxurious and exuberant effects are achieved with simple material. His vocabulary is not extensive and—praise be!—never difficult. His rhymes are ordinary and obvious and often repeated; breath-death a thousand times or more. There is none of Browning's effort, sometimes grotesquely unsuccessful, to find a new outlandish rhyme. The metaphors, too, are not startling, but natural, pictorial, colorful, as images should be; here, again, there is none of Browning's strange similitudes, often marvellous with a hitherto unheard of wonder, but sometimes baffling.

Images are the language of poets, and Swinburne lisps in similes and thunders in tropes. The nouns of his substance are familiar things: birth, life, death, earth, sky, cloud, wind, sun, star, bird, fire, eye, hand, stream, dream, gold, desire, mother, heart; so one might say there are only so many notes on a keyboard. The man of genius is he who takes simple, known, conventional, accepted things and transmutes them into amazing and incredible novelties, who with these few notes and these few words fashions an individual vocabulary, so that when he says "spring has come", which is not a revolutionary statement, you hear his voice distinct from all other voices. How this is accomplished no one knows, not even the poet himself. It simply happens. With Swinburne the magic is largely a matter of melody—all poetry is —a conjuring of words into haunting collocations unlike those into which other people, even other great poets, are wont to arrange them. I do not wish to over-simplify Swinburne's powers or his materials, for he has inner depths and mysteries and bold and challenging ideas. I merely wish to suggest that in *Atalanta* the young master of the black and white arts made of old material and ordinary words a new and deathless song.

II

Atalanta and the other dramatic pieces could have disturbed no man's peace of mind, except by enrapturing his sense and charming him into reverie. Bold and challenging ideas appear promptly in *Poems and Ballads*, a book whose instant notoriety soon changed into abiding fame. The audacity of these stunning new verses struck Swinburne's contemporaries with a force which we cannot feel, for the daring of sixty years ago has been tamed with time, and the challenge is spent in long acceptance. What remains is beauty, for it is the most beautiful collection of lyrics since the death of Shelley. It is said that admiring readers "went about chanting to one another these new, astonishing melodies". Meanwhile the prudes were indulging in horrified curses, and the solemn Betties of the press were giving Swinburne somewhat the treatment that their predecessors had accorded to Keats. The difference was that Keats needed recog-

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nition, whereas Swinburne was a child of wealth, with an excellent constitution and unbounded energy, and he could go blithely and defiantly on his confident way. If you will open *Poems and Ballads* or fetch some of the contents up from your memory, you will find yourself chanting, if not to some other person, surely to yourself. And all can be chanted. For here is pure lyrism in an extraordinary diversity of forms. In a collection of more than fifty poems not one is less than good, not one fails to express what it intends to express, fails through any failure of art, and that is a rare thing in any volume of verse. The supreme things are "Laus Veneris", in FitzGerald's stanza so renovated and appropriated and made flexible that it does not sound in the least like *The Rubáiyát,* "The Triumph of Time", "Hymn to Proserpine", "To Victor Hugo"—and whatever else any reader cares to add, for here is God's own plenty. In all this multiple virtuosity and amplitude of harmonies the one which does the most unbelievable things is the "Hymn to Proserpine", sonorous, intricate, fluid, yet firm as a steel bridge.

> All delicate days and pleasant, all spirits and sorrows are cast
> Far out with the foam of the present that sweeps to the surf of the past:
> Where beyond the extreme sea-wall, and between the remote sea-gates,
> Waste water washes, and tall ships founder, and deep death waits.

Swinburne had already in the dramas shown himself a neo-Elizabethan and a neo-Greek. In several of the *Poems and Ballads* he proclaims himself also a foster-child of France. He masters the French forms, and Victor Hugo is his god. That is, one of his gods. His capacity for burning loyalties is one element of his poetic enthusiasm. He is devoted to Hugo, to Landor, to Mazzini. He worships the ideas which his heroes represent, for he did not know the men in the flesh. Contrary to a belief for which Swinburne's fervid adoration is no doubt responsible, he saw Landor only a few times. For a short period he was ecstatic over Whitman, but he withdrew that allegiance rather abruptly and in not very gentle terms. Love, liberty, literature—these three are the subjects that stir Swinburne to music. And though his sincerity is never in question, one feels that he seizes on any idea in a book or a current event in politics as occasion for an outburst of song in profuse strains of well if swiftly premeditated art. His passions are literary, whatever else they may have been. His life, which is really none of our business, shows no great love affairs such as give an extraneous, perhaps an impertinent and irrelevant interest to the biographies of some men of letters. The only valid reason for touching on this absence of any exciting experiences in his life, so far as it is recorded, is that it may account for the note of wistfulness and disillusion that dominates many of his poems of love:

> This is the end of every man's desire.

Swinburne's interest in contemporaneous political and national movements, already hinted in *Poems and Ballads*, finds fuller expression in "A Song of Italy", inscribed to Mazzini, "Ode on the Proclamation of the French Republic", inscribed, of course, to Victor Hugo, and a curious collection of sonnets called *Dirae*. Liberty, like love, as a poetic theme is perennial. But Swinburne, who has now triumphed over all detraction and is not only acknowledged by the discerning but almost deified as master by the young poets, does not quite hold up as prophet of freedom. He diffuses his copious energy and for a moment ceases to be lyrical and so is lost. Yet are there living flames in *Songs before Sunrise*, which, though dedicated to Mazzini, is clearly under the influence of Hugo, whom Swinburne estimates as the greatest mind since Shakespeare. Hugo's inexhaustible vigor is probably good for Swinburne, whose energy, equally inexhaustible, is of a more delicate, less robust, nature. The English poet

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takes fire from the French and more than once flashes into light and heat and exemplifies his own too alliterative line:

> The lyrist liberty made life a lyre.

But Swinburne presently comes home from the Continent to his own Elizabethan England in a colossal drama, *Bothwell*. The arithmetical statistics of this play are appalling: it is about four times as long as *Hamlet* (no, I have not counted accurately; no man would, except a candidate for the degree of Ph.D.). And it should be remembered that Swinburne did not throw off stupid meaningless lines such as any of us could produce by the mile. He is a poet most of the time if not all the time. The reader groans simply because there is too much of it. Midas starved on excess of gold and was better off when his ears were changed to those of an ass; and he would be an ass, I think, who, being the most devoted admirer of Swinburne, should read this unwieldy "play" through more than once, and that once rapidly and lightly, catching here and there wonderful lines and passages. Not even Wordsworth's *Prelude* is such a killing and plethoric joy. It is difficult to explain why Swinburne, who could shape a lyric as adroitly as a jeweller cuts a gem, who could manage a long narrative with a fair sense of proportion, should run in *Bothwell* so interminably beyond the bounds of reason, art, and endurable sustentation. He had some self-critical sense, as is shown by his excellent parody of himself in *The Heptalogia*, and he was quick to detect violations of form and proportion in others. I think the explanation of the inordinate length of *Bothwell* is that Swinburne, now thirty-six and at the height of productivity, is overloaded with his subject. He is in love with the story of Mary Stuart, as with all things Elizabethan; he is stuffed with it, and he lets it out in a torrent lest he burst. It is a pity to see so much poetic stuff thrown prodigally away like casks of good wine emptied into a stream. This wastage is somewhat redeemed by good scenes and an almost continuously maintained high pitch of dignified blank verse. If Swinburne's beloved Queen often gets lost, her lovely head now and again emerges from the flood. When Bothwell leaves her the Queen says:

> . . . Cover my face for me;
> I cannot heave my hand up to my head;
> Mine arms are broken.

That is good writing, good Elizabethan, and if you found it in a play of the spacious time, you would not feel it out of place.

From this prodigious performance, a love which for very bulk eludes his embrace, Swinburne passes to his other more comely and never forgotten love, Greek tragedy. *Erechtheus* has been outdone by the earlier beauty of *Atalanta*. Indeed many readers stop with *Atalanta* and the first *Poems and Ballads* and so miss the continued and repeated splendors of the later poems. To be sure, the early poems are enough and to spare, and it is the penalty paid by a writer who arrives in a blaze of glory and then persists in manifesting his genius for many years, that the first blaze should blind us to any glory, however magnificent, that may shine round his graying head. To put it journalistically, after Swinburne is thirty a new book by him is not "news". It is more of the same. This is true of any writer who writes past his prime. In Swinburne's case it is especially true, because he is so perpetually, uniformly like himself. *Erechtheus* begins:

> Mother of life and death and all men's days . . .

and one might say, joyfully or in a tone of satiety, "There is the old Swinburne" (he is not yet forty). But forget *Atalanta*, if that be possible, and read on through such a passage as this:

> The populous ship with all its fraughtage gone
> And sails that were to take the wind of time

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Rent, and the tackling that should hold out fast
In confluent surge of loud calamities
Broken, with spars of rudders and lost oars . . .

There is the trick of *enjambement*, which was a revolutionary nine-days' wonder in France in 1830. It is easy enough in English —when Swinburne does it. But try it; or rather don't, for you may make a mess of it.

Then comes the first stately chorus:

Sun, that hast lightened and loosed by thy might
Ocean and Earth from the lordship of night.

The opening four lines of another chorus are such an interplay of accents, compelling one to chant them, as had not been attempted in English poetry (nor of course any other) before, nor equalled since:

Whó shall put a brídle in the moúrner's lips to chásten them,
Or seál úp the fóuntains of his téars fór sháme?
Song nor prayer nor prophecy shall slacken tears nor hasten them,
Till grief be within him as a burnt-out flame.

Will the reader forgive my pedantry in marking the accented syllables, which must be so stressed to get the proper run of the lines? In the first line we have a four-syllable measure, and to break it into trochees, which can be done mathematically, is to ruin it. I think that Swinburne could have made a five-syllable measure if he had willed to make it, for words obey him uncannily. And the effect is not of one performing metrical acrobatics, though he can toss words like a juggler; the effect is always, or almost always, musical. He can sustain a line of impossible length without letting it break in the middle. These are lines spoken by Chthonia, given here without the short intervening lines of the Chorus, which complement and support them:

Let glory's and theirs be one name in the mouths of all nations made glad with the sun.
With the long last love of mine eyes I salute thee, O land where my days now are done.

These lines should not be divided, as any school prosodist can divide them, but should be read in one sweep.

I have dwelt on *Erechtheus* because its marvels seem to have been neglected. It is seldom quoted, whereas "the hounds of spring" race in the ears of every reader of poetry.

For the rest of his long life Swinburne reduplicated and reaffirmed the several aspects of his genius. The graying wizard, who could sustain a line of any incredible length, could, more wonderfully, hold up unfalteringly, with no senile crack in his voice, the voluminous total of his song. His Elizabethan drama is completed in *Mary Stuart*, less formidable than *Bothwell* because shorter, and filled with enough good lines to make a dozen minor poets. Like his master, Victor Hugo, he could not stop, and the thoroughgoing Swinburne-lover will rejoice in this fecund disability. He made his lyre respond again and again with every note and every combination of notes of which it was capable; and it was a lyre that could be struck by no hand but his, for anybody can parody Swinburne but no one can successfully imitate him. But the lyre metaphor seems inadequate. He played an organ as truly as did Milton, or, perhaps to put it better, he had at his command a modern orchestra; for though, in the nature of words, poetry must run in a single line, Swinburne in some inexplicable way so makes one line carry its melody into the next, so echoes and repeats his melodies that the impression is often of many notes sounding at once, of harmony almost in the musician's sense.

He has been charged with a paucity of ideas. I am at a loss to know just what this means. He was primarily a lyric poet, not a philosophic poet, and it is the business of a lyric poet to sing; he sang unfailingly. He hated tyrants and kings and priests, and I dare say Victoria and other monarchs did not

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like him, if indeed they ever heard of him; he certainly never "swiped" to royalty as Tennyson did. He loved all things beautiful from clouds to cats, from old legends to living children (Swinburne's exquisitely tender poems of children should not be forgotten —"Love's Worth Love")—and what more does a poet need, so he be able to say these beautiful things? What is the philosophy of Keats's "Nightingale" or Shelley's "West Wind" or of *The Tempest*? No doubt Swinburne took seriously his blazing indignations; if he had not, they would not have provoked him to song. And similarly he took with high seriousness his adoration of noble men, living and dead. There is in that adoration an attitude perpetually and refreshingly young. Whatever his thought, whether he be discoursing grave music about some aged solemnity such as Fate or Death, he himself seems to be living in an unwithering April or May. Many of his poems begin with Spring:

Upon the flowery forefront of the year
—*Thalassius.*

Spring, born in heaven ere many a springtime flown
—*Birthday Ode for Victor Hugo.*

About the middle music of the spring
—*Tristram of Lyonesse, I.*

And that is not to say that he is not sensitive to all seasons, to desolation and sadness and sorrow. He was for some time under the spell of Baudelaire, and Villon is his brother. As early as the first *Poems and Ballads* he had shown his interest in old French. This interest grew until in the second series of *Poems and Ballads* he made the remarkable translations from Villon and his own ballad to Villon. At that time the French forms were fashionable with English poets and versifiers, who turned them with great skill. Swinburne, versatile and dexterous, made the ballade not merely an exercise in rhyming but a vehicle of expression, naturalizing and appropriating it, as he did every other form to which he put his cunning hand. His "Ballad of François Villon" is the best of all English ballades. And his translations from Villon seem to me to have more feeling, however faithful or free they may be, than any other versions except the rendering by Rossetti of "The Ladies of Old Times".

III

Swinburne was a sort of modern troubadour, a poetic cosmopolite wandering in all times and places and at home everywhere. In the nineteenth century, poets and scholars were digging or plunging, each with his own kind of interest and delight, into the Middle Ages. Perhaps Swinburne could not match learning with W. P. Ker or Jessie Weston or Gaston Paris or Joseph Bédier, but among the poets he is the supreme medievalist. He is a better poet than Morris and (again remembering Dogberry) his *Tristram of Lyonesse* and *The Tale of Balin* make Tennyson look sick. *Tristram of Lyonesse* is the best of all Arthurian poems in substance, general treatment, sheer poetry. To re-create a medieval romance of love and fighting in proper spirit the poet must be in feeling, in imagination, a pagan. For thought the knights of romance were Christians of a sort, they went on piratical crusades disguised as holy wars, and they witnessed putatively, the building of Gothic Cathedrals, but they were untouched with anything like modern piety. Their real religion was the elaborate ritual of chivalry, and a court of love held more authority than any civil or ecclesiastical court. To understand Tristram, the poet must be a pagan but a thoroughgoing romantic. In these respects Swinburne and Wagner, among modern artists, are preëminent.

In the Wagner text the story is reduced to elemental emotions; for an opera can do little with a story as a story. Here the wild, voluptuous paganism is in the music. Swinburne in a full free narrative can play upon the theme at will. Only once does he seem to violate the

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primitive tale by introducing a sophistication only faintly warranted by the original story. When Tristram and Iseult are on the ship sailing from Ireland and before they have drunk the love potion, Tristram tells her of Arthur's unwitting incestuous relations with his sister:

Blind to him blind his sister brought forth seed,
And of the child between them shall be born
Destruction. So shall God not suffer scorn,
Nor in men's souls and lives his law lie dead.

This child is Modred who brings about the downfall of Arthur's court. In the romances, where Arthur is no sublime king but much like his knights in adventures and amours, the relation of Modred to Arthur as son and nephew is taken for granted. Swinburne makes the incestuous relation a cause for punishment on the part of God, thus introducing a motive which is neither modern nor medieval, but Greek. For the rest the sensuous beauty of Swinburne's narrative is of all poetry of all times, even of the despised Victorian age, though no poet of his time and few of any time have matched his luxurious loveliness. Poetry cannot be more gorgeously voluptuous than the second part of *Tristram,* "The Queen's Pleasance", wherein the lovers live their few brief days and nights in the wildwood. Through these forests and gardens and seas of beauty the story runs straight, clear and rapid, speeded rather than hindered by the richness of detail. Swinburne follows the legend in its best form, bringing Tristram to his death by a wound from a poisoned arrow received in a fight and not by the revengeful hand of Mark.

Swinburne says of Marlowe's *Hero and Leander*: "It is doubtful if the heroic couplet has ever been more finely handled". It may be that "heroic" is not just in place there. The pair of rhymed ten-syllable lines is as old as Chaucer and appears frequently in Elizabethan dramas. But "heroic" seems to be more narrowly applicable to that peculiarly sharp development of the couplet which began with Waller and was brought to glittering perfection by Pope; the end-stopped lines rhyme with a snap, and the couplets continue pair by pair with the monotony of railroad ties; only Dryden, Pope and a few others are able to relieve that monotony by grace and wit of phrase. However, we will concede the "heroic" as a technicality and dispute Swinburne in a way that forbids his answering. In *Hero and Leander* the couplet is marvelously used and the lines are like curved festoons of poetry. In *Tristram of Lyonesse* the couplet is simply knocked off its feet and sent sailing on wings. Recall any of Pope's much quoted and brilliant lines and then hear this from *Tristram*:

And the king waking saw beside his head
That face yet passion-coloured, amorous red
From lips not his, and all that strange hair shed
Across the tissued pillows, fold on fold,
Innumerable, incomparable, all gold,
To fire men's hearts with wonder, and with love
Men's hearts; so shone its flowering crown above
The brows enwound with that imperial wreath,
And framed with fragrant radiance round the face beneath.

Or this:

Out of the heaven that storm nor shadow mars,
Deep from the starry depth beyond the stars,
A yearning ardor without scope or name
Fell on them, and the bright night's breath of flame
Shot fire into their kisses; and like fire
The lit dews lightened on the leaves, as higher
Night's heart beat on toward midnight.

What Swinburne did for the couplet he did for English measures generally. He gave them new freedom, variety, shifting stresses, and flexibility of movement, and above all he released English verse from bondage to the two-syllable measure (iambic, if you like the technical word). It may seem incredible that after the second golden age of English poetry with its great poets and master metricians, Coleridge, Keats, Shelley, Wordsworth, there should still be any lingering limitation of

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convention. Yet there was one. The most bewitching lines of those superb poets did their fairy dance in two-time, with only occasional relieving trills and triplications. Shelley, Coleridge, Wordsworth surely knew the three-time and could have told you all there is to know about the dactyl and anapaest in Greek and Latin. But they did not use three-time in their own verse. Swinburne teaches English poetry to waltz like this:

Over two shadowless waters, adrift as a pinnace in peril,
Hangs as in heavy suspense, charged with irresolute light,
Softly the soul of the sunset upholden a while on the sterile
Waves and wastes of the land, half repossessed of the night.

The magic, to be sure, is not merely metrical; anybody can count three and versify. All other devices of a language, already poetically splendid before he approaches it, are within the range of Swinburne's easy and comprehensive mastery. And his liberations, however admirable, are not technical, though a poet must be visibly and outwardly words on paper. His liberation is a liberation of spirit. He is a great poet. He is with Shelley and with Marlowe.

IV

In a fine essay on Shakespeare's prose Francis Thompson says: "It might almost be erected into a rule that a great poet is, if he please, also a master of prose". Swinburne was a master of prose, and he wrote many volumes which are not in metre. His mastery has one defect; his prose is not sufficiently prosaic. When he should walk, he is swimming or flying. He has an immense reservoir of passions, emotions, ideas. When the waters find outlet in verse they run between banks which, however wide, are restraining. When the outpouring is in prose there are no such restraining shores and the torrential flood overflows the landscape. Yet the waters are beautiful and not often muddied by their turbulence; they are splashy and often unsafe to navigate, but they sparkle. The subject of Swinburne's prose is of course always literature. His criticism is wilful, perverse, fiery, prejudiced, sometimes splendidly insane. What do you ask of criticism? If you seek a balanced cool reasonable account of this writer or that, you will not go to Swinburne. That sort of thing is beyond his capacity or intention; you go to Swinburne for something exciting, electric, enflaming. He has no even-handed judgment, but he cannot write five lines without striking off something that a cautious and considerate critic could not think of in a thousand years. His articles in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* on the Elizabethans are as if a nightingale had strayed into a museum.

When he was thirty-five he published a small book called *Under the Microscope*, in which he examines those insects, those vermin, incompetent critics, who without being able, in Pistol's phrase, to hear with their ears, presume to write about poets and poetry. The book is less a microscopic examination than a sweeping machine-gun fire at everything that for the moment Swinburne happens to like or dislike, and yet, far from being diffuse or scattering, the essay has much matter compact in less than ninety pages, and it is exhilarating stuff. Of Byron, whom a foolish critic had needlessly defended and exalted at Tennyson's expense, Swinburne writes, most sanely: "Is the name of Byron fallen so low that such a style of advocacy and such a class of counsel must be sought out to revive its drooping credit and refresh its withered honours? *Quis vituperavit*? Has any one attacked his noble memory as a poet or a man except here and there a journalist of the tribe of Levi or Tartuffe, or a blatant Bassarid of Boston, a rampant maenad of Massachusetts?" So much for the authoress of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Swinburne then proceeds to an excellent criticism of Byron's

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Manfred (which, reversed, applies to Swinburne himself): "It is not the mere fluid melody of dulcet and facile verse that is wanting to him; that he might want and be none the worse for want of it; it is the inner sense of harmony which cannot but speak in music, the innate and spiritual instinct of sweetness and fitness and exaltation which cannot but express itself in height and perfection of song".

In this small book Swinburne pays his respects to Whitman in a wise and moderate estimate, less ecstatic than his poem and less unjust than a later dyslogistic comment. He cuffs Lowell with a phrase which is too good not to quote; Lowell's "Thanksgiving Ode" is "wooden verse sawn into unequal planks". And he thanks Lowell for kindly refraining from calling it Pindaric. Most stimulating of all are the passages on Tennyson. He values "The Lotus Eaters" and "Maud" and "In Memoriam", and then annihilates the "Morte d'Arthur". He says truly that Tennyson has reduced the real tragedy of Arthur to divorce-court vulgarity and made his blameless king a stupid and ridiculous cuckold.

Until the recent studies by W. B. Yeats and others of William Blake, Swinburne's essay of 1867 remained the most penetrating and poetically sympathetic. When this poet meets other poets and celebrates them in prose or verse, something beautiful is sure to result, and the prevailing fault, the only fault, is an excess of enthusiasms, which of course is a generous and splendid merit. Swinburne goes into wild raptures over the beauties of other poets and has always "at heart the honour of English literature". His critical writings should be called not by Pater's word "Appreciations", which was abstract to begin with and is now worn thin, but rather "Enthusiasms", with some chapters that may be named by Zola's title "*Mes Haines*". Everything that Swinburne likes is almost the greatest thing that ever was written, second only, if even second be possible, to Shakespeare and the incomparable Hugo. Swinburne's critical ecstasies are justified, if justification be required, by the fact that he is dealing almost always with poets or other creators of beauty and he speaks about them in terms which are half theirs, half his. In an estimate, say, of Locke or Gibbon, his emotional acclaim would be out of key. But in dealing with the Brontës in a fine little essay it is appropriate that Swinburne should praise those high-strung women in a mood high-strung past reason but by no means past sense. A creative artist himself, he instantly recognizes the subtle force which he calls the creative instinct and which he says is not to be explained by the "most refined pedantry of semi-science, tricked out at second hand by the freshest or the stalest phrases of archaic schoolmen or neologic lecturers". In a word, Mr. Swinburne has no use for what is quaintly called "scientific" criticism, and the sort of teaching of Shakespeare which goes on in schoolrooms would fill his nympholeptic soul with rage; it would be a profanation of his idol and, as it is, a violation of all poetic values.

But Swinburne had a great respect for real scholarship, especially for those great English scholars, his contemporaries, who brought out the fine final texts of his precious Elizabethans. Swinburne read widely and profoundly. His impressionistic criticism is not the response of a little lyre to the great winds of the past. He knew what he was talking about, and if he sometimes talked like a drunken angel, he certainly never talked like a besotted schoolmaster or like a silly "moodist" of three slack strings. He comes to literature with an immense inclusive but not indiscriminate credulity. As he says in his "Note on Charlotte Brontë", after a side shot at Newman, whom, dialectician and priest, Swinburne could not abide: "Belief, and not assent, it is that we give to the highest". He puts Charlotte Brontë in the third, that is, the highest of three classes of creative genius and puts George Eliot and George Meredith in the very honorable and bril-

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liant second class. If this order of merit does not please you, the solution of your displeasure is not to quarrel with Swinburne but to read Charlotte Brontë and her sister Emily. For Swinburne's intoxications are contagious, or rather infectious. It is dangerous to read his *Sonnets On English Dramatic Poets*, for one may be seduced into spending the rest of the month or the year with the Cambridge *Shakespeare* and the "Mermaid Series" and forget everything else.

Swinburne's prose studies of Shakespeare and his contemporaries, especially the essays on Jonson and Chapman, belong to that rare kind of criticism which is creative literary art, which is Lamb and Hazlitt, which is (though Swinburne might not quite "assent" to it) Arnold and Pater. Swinburne got more joy out of a poor Elizabethan play than most people derive from *Hamlet*. Yet, let it be repeated, he is not indiscriminate but very sensitive; he is alert to the failures even of his god Marlowe. In the Elizabethan heaven Swinburne is agape among his gods and demi-gods. It is permissible to be a little amused at his efforts to classify them. There is Shakespeare-Zeus supreme; no question of that. What demigod or titan can come up to the arm-pits or the waist or the knees of the Most High? The candidates for secondary honors are Jonson, Chapman, Webster. It really makes no difference, and Swinburne's classifications, marshallings and brevettings of his divine host are merely his way of saying how great and beautiful everything great and beautiful is. And it is. For literature consists simply of the great and beautiful, and true writing about literature consists simply in recognizing, proclaiming, celebrating that eminent truth.

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THE HOUSE

by Janet Lewis

THE HOUSE and barn were painted yellow with white trim. The house was large, three stories high, with a many-gabled roof. On each ridge-pole stood a white wood fence in arabesques. A large covered porch ran from the front of the house halfway around the south side, a white porte-cochère opened on the north to the gravelled drive, and there were various small balconies and bay windows which enlarged the simple shape of the building. The barn was big enough for a carriage room, stalls, a manger and an apartment for the gardener and his family. The barn and the house were surrounded by low bushes, snowball, syringa, yellow spicebush. At the end of the smooth lawn was a small maple grove. Near the barn were the rose garden and the strawberry beds. To the north of the house two or three clumps of purple lilac had made themselves into a small forest. The trees about the house were elm, box-elder, pine. When the house was first built, the lawn smoothed, the rose-garden planted, the two empty blocks across the street had been cornfields, and the blocks to the north nothing but prairie, where violets and wild strawberries grew in the long grass.

Little by little, as the suburb became popular, the vacant lots filled with homes, and the Wilkey estate was left rather like some old English hunting-ground in the middle of a city. The children in the neighborhood thought of it so. It provided vistas, ambushes and retreats. No one ever told them not to climb in the maple trees, or chased them off the roof of the barn. At the end of the block was a pasture where the old cow grazed. It was surrounded by a board fence, and a cluster of mulberry trees grew near the fence. The trees were too frail to climb, and Frances Donalson and the red-headed Niles boy used to sit on top of the fence, picking berries from the lacy boughs, and watching the cow wade through deep clover stems. Frances Donalson's grandmother lived in the yellow house. Her father was Jesse Donalson, a gentle-faced young man with graying hair and skin. He taught chemistry in the high school, and a slight acid odor from the laboratory clung always to his clothing. Her mother was Mary Wilkey. Her Aunt Roberta and her Aunt Kate lived in the big house with her grandmother along with her Uncle Archibald and her cousins and second cousins, the children and grandchildren of Aunt Kate and Uncle Archie. The second cousins were near her own age, slightly older, however, and more advanced in their amusements. They didn't think much of sliding down the barn roof. The first cousins were old enough to be her aunts. There were five of them. Three of them were married, and had homes of their own, but since they were always dropping in for supper, for lunch, and to use the sewing machine, to visit Grandma, to visit each other, to plan parties and expeditions, they might as well

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have lived there as far as it concerned the imagination of the little cousin or the labors of Annie.

Annie lived on the top floor. The top floor was attic except for Annie's room, which was plastered and ceiled. Frances sometimes went upstairs to visit her, shutting the stairway door behind her carefully, and climbing the steep dark way toward the dusty sunlight. The attic smelled of warm wood, mice, and old boxes. It was like a front yard to Annie's room, which smelled of soap and prayer books.

In her Aunt Roberta's room, which was on the first floor, were a porcelain mandarin who nodded his head, a rose jar smelling of cinnamon, and a snowstorm in a globe. When you held the glass ball still in your hand the snow settled gently upon the roof of the tiny mill and on the small green bushes. When you shook it, the snow rose again into the air and it stormed. Under the bed were many boxes full of carefully tied packages. A few of these were letters, but most of them were old theatre programs, church programs, rolls of wrapping paper, brown paper bags, smoothed and folded carefully. There were a great many of the little gay paper fans, advertising summer drinks, which the drugstores give away in hot weather. Aunt Roberta saved things without knowing why she was saving them. No one was allowed to touch them. When she went out walking she carried her pocketbook, an extra wrap, and a brown paper parcel. Sometimes she had forgotten what was in the parcel, but she carried it because she would not have felt properly equipped without it. Once she had suffered from a disease of the skin, and her legs had been heavily bandaged. Over the bandages she wore a pair of white stockings, and over the white stockings a dark pair. After her skin was healed she was persuaded to give up the bandages, but she never gave up the white stockings. Frances was very fond of her Aunt Roberta. They went walking together, and Roberta bought paper dolls, whole regiments by the sheet, and sticks of sweet paraffin gum, done up in colored wrappers with fringed ends. Sitting on the hassock by her Aunt Roberta's armchair, Frances cut out the regiments and arranged them in military fashion on the floor, and her aunt leaned over her, watching in admiration.

Roberta was the oldest of Mrs. Wilkey's daughters. Her hair, once brown, had turned an even iron gray and became wiry and crisp. It looked frowzy, no matter how often it was combed. Her skin was brown, and her eyes short-sighted. She refused to wear glasses, and scowled, even when she smiled. One day Mary, entering by the front door, had found Frances and Roberta in the hall, weeping and clinging to each other. As far as she could find out from their answers, Kate had scolded Roberta for making Frances cry, Roberta had cried, and Frances had wept for Roberta. They were joined together against Kate, the old child and the young child comforting each other.

James Wilkey left no large oil portrait of himself to gaze down upon his grandchildren from the parlor wall. There were a few daguerreotypes in velvet cases in Mrs. Wilkey's top bureau drawer, but the house itself was a more accurate portrait. The height of the doors, the largeness and uprightness of the furniture, the spaciousness of the rooms, seemed to indicate an erect, gray-coated figure moving among them. Mrs. Wilkey's plump short person passing with rapid step from dining room to living room, from living room to hall, oversaw these rooms for someone else. As she grew older she went about the house less and sat more in her large sunny bedroom on the second floor. Kate also kept to her own room a great deal, being a semi-invalid, a heavy, white-haired woman, lying in bed with a faded pink bed-jacket about her shoulders. Kate's children filled the house.

They were a gay lot. They never had enough money to dress as they would have

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liked to, but what money they had they spent on clothes, and they were endlessly revising old clothes to be a little more smart, a little more fresh. They left their scissors and tape-measures on the parlor chairs, along with scraps of ribbons, basting threads and faded bunches of cloth flowers. They made their own hats, beginning sometimes fifteen minutes before the hour when they wanted to wear them. They had many beaux, but when beaux were short they commandeered their father, calling him Archie, and tweaking his necktie. They would take off his gray felt hat and put it back on his head at a rakish angle, and kiss him behind the ears. They liked classy shows, but liked cheap shows better than no shows at all, and on a sultry summer afternoon they would take Archie by the arm and march him off to Forest Park, to the roller-coasters and scenic railways. They would ride out in an open car, watching the dust and the torn papers fly up from the street at the rush of the wheels, and after the fun in the Park was over they would cross the street to a cheap German restaurant, and have beer and cheese sandwiches with rye bread.

Archibald Martin had a way of getting jobs easily, but he had a way of losing them, too. When he was working he contributed his share to the expenses of the house, and when he was out of work, he didn't. When he was out of work he spent most of his time at home, which pleased the girls and made things merrier. They said, "After all, Gran's rich". He made a few investments. Some of them were successful, but several times he was obliged to apply to his mother-in-law for help when luck had been against him. Then he had a famous chance to make good money and pay back all he owed, if Gran would only lend him a little capital to start things off.

The old lady objected. Martin sat with hurt, surprised eyes, his fingers fidgeting with the ends of his sandy beard. He said, "You have always been so generous. I thought I could surely count on you, and it's all for your good. In fact it's mainly for the sake of paying back what I owe you. I don't like to owe you money".

Mrs. Wilkey said dryly, "I don't object to your owing me money, Archibald, or to giving it to you, either. In a way, all that I have given you has been yours, or would have been yours sooner or later. It's simply that, if this goes on, there will presently be nothing at all to give you. I don't know that it's exactly fair to your daughters, either. You are spending their inheritance".

"But Gran," he said, "I am going to restore their inheritance."

Mrs. Wilkey deliberately clipped the end of a thread from a sock she was mending. "Very well," she said at length. "If the girls consent to your investing this money, I will let you have it, but I want it plainly understood that you are, all of you, receiving your share of the inheritance now."

She began to hunt for a fresh needle in the red cotton tomato, and as she said nothing more, and did not look up from her search, Martin rose and went awkwardly and silently out of the room.

The girls were delighted at the prospect of rehabilitating the family fortunes, and Gran drew the check that Archibald required.

He bought a bunch of sweet peas for Gran on his way home from the city that night, and Gran was pleased with them. He bought them at the second-hand flower stand on the lower bridge of the elevated station and they withered quickly, but that did not matter.

When Sue, Kate's oldest daughter, divorced her husband, there had been nothing else to do but come home to the yellow house, bringing the two children, Leo and Sophia. Sue got herself a job in a firm of interior decorators, and paid her share of the expenses of the house. Gran gave her the barn for an office and workshop, and she set up business for herself, moving her work-tables into the carriage room, and wheeling the

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antique surrey and barouche into the corner. It was too late to sell them. Nobody wanted a barouche. Nobody wanted a low green cutter with pictures painted on its sides. Will, the divorced husband, came regularly to see her, preferring to bring the monthly check in person. "Alimony night," Sue would call, running upstairs. "I must get into my chauncy ear-rings." Will had been divorced for drinking, and he lived in hopes of conquering himself and being reinstated in his family, but Sue liked him better as a lover than as a husband. He was a slender dark-eyed man with a silky black moustache. He drew marvellous pictures for the children, and always had a pocketful of finely pointed pencils.

"Come now," Mary heard Sophia saying to Frances. "My father's here, and your father's coming over, and you're going to stay for supper. Come and tell Annie and hear her say with the help of God and a couple of policemen." Mary stood in the hall, holding the telephone, waiting for her husband to answer. Presently she heard the children in the kitchen.

"Can you get supper for four extra tonight?" said Sophia, and Annie answered, "With the help of God and a couple of policemen I can. Get out of here now, the two of you".

The children tiptoed past her, very pleased, and went into the parlor to beg for pictures.

It was the middle of February, a week before Gran's eightieth birthday. The house was sheeted in a sticky, sleety rain, and the afternoon was dark. In Sue's room, Sophia, Frances and Roberta were making paper roses by gaslight. Sue looked in occasionally to see how things were going. Marianne Martin came in once or twice but did not stay. She was spending the afternoon with Mrs. Wilkey to keep the old lady busy.

Frances and Sophia were curling the edges of petals on a hatpin. They stretched the centers a little with their thumbs, making them hollowed and flowerlike, and dropped them into a box. Sometimes Frances shook the box and raked the pink shells about lightly with the tips of her fingers, thinking of her Aunt Roberta's rose jar. She liked the paper petals as well as the real ones. By and by Cousin Sue and Cousin Marianne would build them up into flowers, fastening them to a stem, binding the stem with green and attaching green leaves. There were already big boxes of flowers in the closet and under the bed. Her Aunt Roberta was cutting out petals from a pattern, breathing heavily as she worked, and stopping often to watch the little girls. The house was full of conspiracy. When it came time for Frances to go home to supper, Cousin Sue brushed her off with a whisk broom.

"It would never do to have you running in to kiss Gran all covered with pink scraps. She'd smell a mouse. Yes, ma'am, smell a mouse and see it brewing in the air."

When the birthday came, a long table made of boards and saw-horses was set up in the big rep-curtained dining-room and decorated with pink and green. The room was festooned with roses and lighted with candles, and there were pink and green baskets full of nuts at every one's place. There was a big white mint candy, the size of a cooky, for everyone, too, marked in pink sugar with "Eighty". The birthday cake was in the kitchen, waiting to be lighted, but Frances and Sophia had seen it before Annie chased them out. It had eighty little pink candles around it in a ring.

The children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and the sons- and grandsons-in-law gathered in Mrs. Wilkey's room, upstairs, and descended to the dining-room in a grand march. Mrs. Wilkey headed the procession on the arm of Archibald Martin, and Frances and Roberta brought up the rear, quivering with excitement. Annie stood at the door in a fresh white apron to usher them in.

There were eighteen of them at the table. They jostled each other and talked all at

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once, resembling each other, if taken in the proper order, like the progressive chords in a harmony which lead from one key to another.

Annie brought in the cake with its circle of little flames, and Marianne pounded on the table and cried, "Speech, Grandma, speech". Mrs. Wilkey stood up, the candles making funny upward shadows on her face, and everyone cheered. Sue said, "Don't cry, Gran". Mrs. Wilkey looked down the long table. The tears shone on her cheeks; she made her speech, and cut the cake. Frances did not eat her white candy with the pink letters, but saved it to look at.

One morning in the autumn after Gran's eightieth birthday, Mary sat with her mother in the upstairs room. The elms were turning brown. The trolley cars in Lake Street, a block away, sounded muffled and far, as if the haze in the air had enveloped sound as well as form. Both women were sewing. Mrs. Wilkey seemed to put off what she had to say as long as she could. When she had folded her work and laid it aside, she made her announcement in a voice from which old age had gradually withdrawn the timbre.

"I've sold the house, Mary."

"Oh, Mother!"

"I have not told your sister Kate. The agreement allows me the use of it as long as I shall live, and the money is to be paid to the estate after my death. The Martin tribe will have to shift for itself. I am very sorry, but it had to be done." She looked about the room with affection and some regret, and said humorously, "I don't intend to die for some time. . . .

"For Roberta I have set aside twenty thousand. I should like to leave you as much. If, after Roberta's twenty thousand and twenty for you, there is anything left, it goes to the Martins. That's all in my will. But I will not saddle you with Roberta. You will be her guardian, but she will not have to live with you. She will be happier if she doesn't, and it will be more fair to you and Jesse."

Mary moved her lips to form a protest, but did not speak it.

"The Martins have already had their share. I have been very weak with 'em. I love them too much, but while my head's clear I'm arranging not to be weak with 'em after my death."

She finished up the conversation in much the same manner in which she finished and folded up her work, and Mary was not invited to discuss the subject with her.

Early that winter Mrs. Wilkey died. Kate and Mary were alone in the house with her. Kate was dazed and made stupid by the event. She sat in an armchair in her mother's room, staring at the floor or the foot of the bed, her face dull with unrealized sorrow. Mary had to meet the girls and Roberta and tell them of the death of someone who, in that moment it seemed to her, belonged almost more to them than to herself.

On the morning of the funeral she stood at the house door, leaning her head against the cold wood of the jamb. Flowers, tied with a purple ribbon, hung there above the bell, close to her face. They had a coolness which seemed apart from the coolness of the morning, either less or more cool, Mary could not think. It was snowing a little from a cloudy sky, the flakes falling upon the crust of snow already fallen, and masking the brown of the sidewalk that had been cleaned. A few flakes rose now and then from the ground, joining the hesitant turmoil in the air, and falling again. Mrs. Wilkey lay in the parlor, surrounded by flowers. Sue and Marianne had filled the coffin with pink roses. Now that she lay still, the small hands, the large head and strong throat, all the compact old body assumed a great dignity. Roberta had spent the morning near her, refusing to leave the room. When the guests began to arrive, Mary went into the parlor and put her arm about Roberta, who wept again at the touch of affection. Then they went upstairs hand in hand, exiled from the dead.

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When the will was read, some days later, and the estate gone over, there was found to be the twenty thousand for Roberta and eighteen thousand for Mary. The expenses of the funeral had to be charged to the estate, as well as all the flowers the Martins had ordered, for they themselves had no money.

They said to Jesse Donalson, "We wanted Gran to have a real funeral, and we thought that part of the estate, at last, was ours".

Mary had not been present at the reading of the will. The doctor had ordered her to stay in bed and rest for a month. Marianne came to see her, sitting in a chair at the foot of the bed, looking across the stretch of white counterpane at Mary's wan face. Marianne was very pretty and the emotion of the ten days had made her features more mobile and alive. She drew the fingers of her glove slowly through her closed hand, hesitating. "Aunt Mary," she said, "I'm sorry you're sick, but I came to talk about the will. It doesn't seem to be the way Gran meant it to be, and we feel—all of us—that Gran would be disappointed that we weren't remembered. Bitterly disappointed. Gran said that she meant each of us to have two thousand dollars—that is, outside of what father and mother were to have." She stopped. Her lip quivered a little. "I don't really mind for myself so much. I don't need it—much—but it is hard on Eleanor and Katrina. Sue has her business, and Debby has Tim, who is well enough off."

She stopped again, and Mary looked at the ceiling which seemed sallow and grimy. Her body felt cold under the warmth of the blanket. She said, "I guess Jesse and I can spare you something—something for you and Eleanor and Katrina, your two thousand each, if Gran wanted that".

Marianne stood up, looking curiously regretful. She said, "Well, goodby, Aunt Mary. You always were a dear". She went toward the door. As she went out she turned and blew a kiss from the palm of her hand.

Mary did not see her again. Marianne and her husband went west to live. Eleanor went to New York, to go on the stage, if she could. Katrina went with her. Mary never heard if they managed it or not. Even Sue moved to New York finally, and none of them wrote to Mary. They were none of them any good at letters.

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THE HISTORY OF THEIR BOOKS

XIII. GERTRUDE ATHERTON

by Arthur Bartlett Maurice

WHEN, many years ago, the term literary anarchy was first applied to the work of Gertrude Atherton, it was not so much intentional disparagement as it was the critics' way of expressing their puzzled surprise at her rebellious departure from the conventional and expected fields and methods of writing. For from the days of *Patience Sparhawk and Her Times* she has always been a pioneer; always a little ahead of her time. That is illustrated by a particular cult of the present hour. The little army of practitioners of the craft of the romantic biography, which has already winnowed history, might with justice echo the traditional boast associated with the aristocracy of England: "We date from the Conqueror". For Mrs. Atherton's *The Conqueror*, the life story of Alexander Hamilton, written almost thirty years ago, was the first conspicuous modern example of a biography in the form of a novel.

The Conqueror was suggested by a line in Bryce's *American Commonwealth*, which Mrs. Atherton was reading as a background for *Senator North*. Bryce expressed his astonishment that the most delightful and gifted of American statesmen should have been so neglected. The line fired Mrs. Atherton. She was in Bruges at the time. She took the next available ship for the United States. The question of how she should treat the subject long puzzled her. Since she was not a poet she could not write an epic, and the novel at that time was more or less a pivotal thing. Then it suddenly occurred to her to write a fictionized, or dramatized, biography; in other words to keep strictly to facts, but to light them up with the methods of fiction. Her first idea was to call the book "Alexander Hamilton", but her publisher objected; so she sent him a list of half a dozen titles and from them he chose *The Conqueror*.

In preparation for the writing a vast amount of reading and research was required. She was helped by the Hamilton Association, by Hamilton enthusiasts, and by the Hamilton family. The family placed at her disposal documents that had hitherto been inaccessible. Having absorbed this data, she went to the Danish West Indies, first to Nevis, to endeavor to clear away the mystery of Hamilton's birth, then to St. Croix, where Hamilton spent his youth and then to St. Vincent and St. Christopher (St. Kitts).

The new form that Mrs. Atherton invented for *The Conqueror* has ever since been closest to her heart. She is never keenly interested in any of her books except the historical or semi-historical, for she finds a stronger appeal in the past and more exercise for the imagination. Also it is a tremendous release from the present, which she has never found greatly interesting. So after *The Conqueror* she read all sorts of histories and biographies but was attracted by no other character until she remembered Rezanov. Although it belonged in the atmosphere of "the

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splendid, idle 'forties", *Rezanov* was written long after those tales of early California life. For years she carried it in mind, occasionally suggesting it to her publishers, who demurred at the idea, expressing their preference for a modern novel. So modern novels she continued to write.

Then one day, after a due amount of research, she began *Rezanov* in earnest. It was in April 1906, and Mrs. Atherton was living in Berkeley, California, where, as it happened, she looked from her window out upon the Golden Gate, through which Rezanov had sailed exactly one hundred years before to the month. With that setting before her the opening chapters were written. Then, on April 18th, came the earthquake. Never did she face a harder task than that of projecting herself back a hundred years in that time when she was surrounded by the inescapable present. Yet she managed to find an attic somewhere, and there she finished the book.

The history of Mrs. Atherton's books is a story of many lands and many cities. *Patience Sparhawk and Her Times,* her first long novel, was written in Yonkers, New York. The character and the story emerged out of nowhere. The hero of *Senator North* was Senator Hale of Maine. Mrs. Atherton was living in London and was asked so many questions about American politics, about which she had only the vaguest ideas, that finally she said one night at a dinner that she would go to Washington and study American politics at first hand. For a week or two she sat in the Ladies' Gallery of the Senate hoping to be inspired, and finally chose Senator Hale for hero as he looked the most interesting. "Little could be said for the others," is her caustic reminiscent comment. Having gathered her material she recrossed the Atlantic and went to Bruges to write the story.

The hero of *Tower of Ivory* was the present Earl of Dunham, whom Mrs. Atherton knew in Munich as John Lambton, a curious and complex character who would have appealed to any novelist who had the opportunity to study him. The heroine was Fossbender, the great dramatic soprano of the Hof und National Theatre of Munich. Mrs. Atherton is quite sure that the two never met, and the narrative is from beginning to end pure invention. The first suggestion of the story came when the author saw, in an American newspaper, reproductions of photographs of an English nobleman and his American wife. She records: "As I looked at her backgroundless face contrasted with the product of uninterrupted centuries I fell to wondering what they would find in common and how it would turn out. As a matter of fact, I believe that it turned out very well".

But *Tower of Ivory* was not written in Munich, for Mrs. Atherton had put the scene back in the 1880's, and found the present too obtrusive. So she travelled seven thousand miles to Mount Tamalpais and there, while it stormed fifty days and fifty nights, outdoing the Bible, she wrote the first part. When the noise of the storm stopped her brain stopped. And when the hot weather came and the rattlesnakes crept out she left for San Francisco—"the best place, after all, I have found to write in".

Her *Black Oxen* was written in New York, and was suggested by interviews in the newspapers with Dr. Benjamin after Dr. Lorenz acknowledged that he had been rejuvenated by the Steinach treatment. The book opens with a scene in the theatre where a striking looking woman whom no one knows stands up between the acts and surveys the audience through her opera-glasses; something that one sees constantly in Europe, but never here. Mrs. Atherton had written the scene long before, but try as she would she could not get that woman out of the theatre, nor did she know who she was. In fact she remained standing there for five years, and not until the author read those interviews did her story flash to the mind. Somewhat similar was the origin of *Mrs. Balfame*, also written in New York. That story was suggested by a trial

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Mrs. Atherton attended, but no real characters were used.

Mrs. Atherton's latest field for fiction is ancient Greece, and she is puzzled by the fact that she did not turn to it earlier. She read much of Greek history—all the Greek historians, in fact, Plato, Plutarch and the others—in her early twenties, and nothing has ever interested her so much as the Greek tragic poets and Aristophanes. But other things intervened and somehow she never thought of ancient Greece until the summer of 1925, when a chance remark in Monte Carlo—of all places—started her off. She immediately sent for lives of Pericles, and in October went to Greece. She remained there only two weeks; she did not want to receive an indelible impression of modern Athens, a swarming city of nine hundred thousand inhabitants. The only other places she visited were Corinth and Mycenæ. Then, armed with a small library, she returned to San Francisco and wrote *The Immortal Marriage*, the fruit of the reading, in all, of about two hundred books. *The Jealous Gods* followed as a natural sequence, as Alcibiades figured in the first book from the age of five to nineteen. Tiy, in *The Jealous Gods*, is a pure fabrication, symbolizing the women of Egypt, who were dominant at that time.

Mrs. Atherton's latest novel, *Dido, Queen of Hearts*, was written at the suggestion of Professor Tanner of New York University for the Virgil bimillennium. For that book she had to read up Phoenicia and Carthage. Aside from her historical novels she has rarely, if ever, taken a plot from real life. The semi-historical stories, *Sleeping Fires* and *A Daughter of the Vine*, were real stories of the 1860's told her by her mother.

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ENGLISH OVER THE WORLD

by Janet Rankin Aiken

VERY OFTEN you may see in the papers signs of the progress of English toward world-wide use. These forecasts are accompanied by emotional outbursts ranging from hisses to hurrahs, for there is nothing which arouses the stronger intellectual passions as much as the question of how we shall speak.

Frequently these bits of news take the form of reports, written in the quaint journalese of our day, that Mexico or Persia or Chile has banned or will ban our English talkies for fear its native children will come to think our tongue more agreeable than their own. Now and then the items merely inform the public that English has been adopted as the official language of another international gathering. One and all they point to the world-domination of English, like it or not as you may.

Presumably most of us who speak English (or American, which I hope for our practical purposes may be termed English) applaud the news of its spread. You are naturally glad to see the horse you ride winning the race. But if your reasoning upon the subject stops with that—if you approve of English over the world just because you speak it—then you may have a use for some further information on the subject.

Even the four-word peace plan, "Make Everybody Speak English", which Henry Ford formulated some years since, is not logically a reason for the universal use of our tongue. Any language, if spoken everywhere, would make for world peace; there is no reason why English should be a more pacific speech than any other. It is not numbers, nor politics, nor trade, nor the talkies—the four reasons most frequently given—which make English a good language for the world to use. These are merely the accidents of a beneficent fate. They do not penetrate the true inwardness of the matter.

First, numbers. We are told that two hundred and twenty millions of people either use or understand English, as compared to only about one hundred and twenty millions for French and one hundred and ten millions for German, and these numbers are advanced as if they really meant anything. But unless English is in itself a good and worthy language for the world to use, all the numbers in the world won't make it so.

Second, politics. The World War unquestionably enhanced in tremendous measure the prestige of the two great English-speaking commonwealths. Our local boys have been financially advising most of the governments there are, and they have made good, too. Hand in hand with American advisers have gone British diplomats, and together they have done much toward bringing about world peace according to the Ford recipe. But—is English a good language for everybody to speak?

Third, trade. The American dollar has swept the money markets of the world, and the pound sterling is not far behind it. Did

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you follow the stock reports in the late crash —oh, didn't you!—and did you notice how securities all over the globe were affected? It was a touching tribute to our financial leadership. But if "dollar" is not a better word than "franc" or "lira", what do these facts matter?

Finally, talkies. Talkies made in Hollywood are riding triumphant over all the foreign bans, propagandizing the English language, American edition, wherever the sun shines. The talkie may well prove the most effective instrument yet invented for spreading English.

But ought English to be spread? Is it intrinsically a better language than French or German or even Chinese? This is the moral question which lurks behind the facts, and this is the question which we must now consider. Back in 300 B.C., to take a parallel instance, Hellenic Greek became a world language. It supplanted to a large extent many local tongues, among them the Hebrew and Aramaic of Palestine. Yet either was incomparably a better language than Greek, simpler, more effective, easier to learn and to use. Is it the same today? Is there a tongue which would do better than English for world use?

Not to keep you longer in suspense, let me assure you that there is not. English is the best because it is the simplest language, most cosmopolitan, most comprehensive, easiest to learn and to use. Fate is playing on the nations today no such shabby trick as when she compelled the Jews of Palestine to learn Greek. Here for once at least in history, might and right coincide.

Linguists know this answer, but with the ostrich instinct of the learned, they disguise it with words. Instead of calling English frankly "best", they say "most mature", and let it go at that. So let us inquire what the linguist means by maturity.

It is a curious fact that language as we now know it develops not from the simple to the complicated, but the other way round—from the complicated to the simple. Whenever we can trace more than one stage in a language's history we find that the earlier speech is more difficult, more unwieldy. Latin is complication personified compared to three of its modern children, French, Spanish and Italian. So far as Modern Greek has changed from Classic Greek, it has simplified. Coptic has lost many of the complications present in the tongue of the hieroglyphs and the Aramaic of 300 B.C. held but a shadow of the grammatical difficulties which were present in its parent Semitic dialect.

To be sure, we have never met a language a-borning, and so we can only guess that somewhere a stage of simplicity must have preceded those complications upon which our earliest gaze rests. But that is a matter of speculation. What we do know as a present linguistic law is this: time simplifies a tongue. Gradually the language begins to forsake its numerous declensions and conjugations, its optative, cohortative, predicative moods, and all the other flummeries of primitive speech. Gradually there begins to emerge a lean, efficient dialect.

This simplification has not always been considered a linguistic virtue. The proper adjective to use in describing antique languages was *rich*, and for more recent developments, *degenerate* or *decadent*. What was the Greek verb if not rich, with the hundred varying dresses it might wear? And does not the modern English verb display a decadence verging upon shamelessness with only two?

It was in 1892 that a Danish scholar, Otto Jespersen, punctured this legend with a book called *Progress in Language*; and since then "decadence" has had things all its own way. And after all, why not? Can you picture yourself selecting among the twelve possible forms of *bonus* when you might be using the single word *good*?

So the first reason why English is the best world language is that it has carried this simplification of forms farther than has any other modern language. In German *good* still has six dresses to wear, and in French four. The German verb still counts its forms by

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the trunkful, and the French verb is not much better. Danish alone of modern tongues has approached English in its formlessness, and it has not caught up with us by any means.

Grammatical formlessness is not the only qualification English possesses for its wide mission. A second, scarcely less important, is its impurity. English is probably more impure than any other tongue, ancient or modern, and this fact well qualifies it for world use.

In the innocence of its impurity, our tongue may be likened to almost any little child going out walking. The child sees an old bottle, or a match-box, or a lost penny; he picks it up and, unless forcibly prevented, puts it into his mouth. Perhaps French and German may be likened to children who have horrified nursemaids who never let them get dirty.

Certainly English picks up words from any language at all. It has never thought of holding itself pure and aloof, and by the process it has succeeded in making itself international. Scarcely any foreigner learns English without finding many old friends in the new vocabulary. Impurity is a good characteristic for a world language. English deserves universal use because it is formless, impure and wordy. Wordiness is not usually considered a virtue any more than impurity is; but words are the wealth of English, and the riches of its word-hoard are only paralleled by the riches of the Anglo-American nations. No user of our tongue need be repetitious; he can vary his words with synonyms or near-synonyms in almost endless variety. *The New Oxford Dictionary* contains almost half a million words. And all this store of wealth is free to anyone who can use it.

Has English no defects, to set against this formidable array of virtues? Yes, indeed. We have a bad alphabet, a tough pair of articles, *a* and *the*, and a difficult idiom in prepositions. But on the other hand, we have a natural gender, an easy sentence order, and a splendid tolerance of almost any accent or grammar so long as the ideas it expresses be good. Balancing defects against virtues, we may reasonably conclude that the applauders of World English have a sound linguistic justification for their choice, unrecognized as this fact may be in their eyes.

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FICTION

CONFESSIONS OF ZENO *by Italo Svevo* (KNOPF. $3.00)

HAMLET is, of course, perennial. There will always be minds less interested in photographing the world than in charging it with the hues of their own fancy, and less skilful in enjoying it than in utilizing it as a tool for mental self-castigation. The originality of Italo Svevo's masterpiece does not lie in the conception of the character Zeno, but in shifting him from the traditional level of romantic tragedy (*Hamlet, Werther, René*) to that of intellectual comedy. Introspection viewed as a laughable though not necessarily ridiculous process—there is the core of this rich and delightful novel.

Zeno has two cousins, a great and a small: Don Quixote and Sentimental Tommy. His madness, far less extreme than the Don's, similarly transmutes reality into a quixotic (or zenotic) universe; and his vanity, far more subtle than Tommy's, similarly erects barrages of rationalization and self-pity to protect himself from his own weaknesses. Like both, he really lives only inside his head; but, like both, he is quite confident of his power to understand other people and exterior events.

Zeno is rich; he is idle (unless his mad business flurry can be called activity); he is over-active mentally; he is preternaturally indecisive; and he is not a romantic, even in his love-affairs. Thus he has most of the qualities which make up the perfect ironist —except balance. He goes through a series of emotional relationships with his father, with three sisters (he desires two and marries the third), with his brother-in-law, with his psycho-analyst, without once judging these relationships in what we should describe as a normal manner. The ironic twist to his mind makes him see all things and people in terms of that irony, which is really self-irony. He is surprised and amused at his own eccentricity; and transfers it to everyone he meets. Life, says Zeno, is neither just nor unjust; it is merely "original". . . . "One need only remind oneself of all that we men expect from life to see how very strange it is, and to arrive at the conclusion that man has found his way into it by mistake and does not really belong there."

It is, obviously, Zeno himself, the comically maladjusted personality, who "does not really belong there". He blunders into the most complicated scrapes—with his wife, with his mistress, with his business partner, and especially with himself—but, by a miraculous power of rationalization, so intense that it is really a disease, he is enabled to continue respecting himself, though by the conventional canons of society he would be termed an immoral man. This power of delusionary adjustment is perfectly Freudian in its mechanism—each emotional or sexual block is opposed by an exactly equivalent capacity to remove the block via a complete shift of attention or a process of minimization or perhaps simple forgetfulness. But Zeno is not a mere unconscious rationalizer; he is aware of the subterfuges of his mind, but is quite unable to control them. Yet he is not afflicted by any sense of inferiority; he feels, indeed, that his mental disease makes him a more charming and intriguing personality (which is of course exactly the case). He says, with delightful simplicity, "the world would be less disagreeable if there were more people like me in it".

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The continuous process of self-justification which Zeno goes through is usually associated with puritanism, with a sense of sin—than which nothing could be more alien to Zeno's Latin temperament. Although the original title of the book was "The Conscience of Zeno" one is forced to believe the phrase ironical, as Zeno's bewilderments begin by being moral but almost instantaneously pass over into intellectual or dialectical or merely playful levels. His introspection is rather the product of an over-stimulated imagination which cannot find sufficient food for itself in the spectacle of objective existence. "I believe," says Zeno, "if someone gave me a box on the ear I should begin analyzing the cause." This febrile impulse toward analysis, if frequently yielded to, will eventually give rise to the Hamlet or Jack-in-the-Box reaction. The tendency to action being too often and too complicatedly repressed, at last the sufferer will break out with some seemingly unreasonable piece of violence—as when Zeno comes very near murdering his best friend.

All of Zeno's tortuousities, related by himself in a scrupulous and delightful ironical prose, are placed on a comic level, even when such seemingly tragic matters as death and sexual betrayal are involved. The humor is frequently of that macabre Italian type to which Pirandello has accustomed us; but more usually it is less theatrical and resides rather in the amazing, twisted, eager, ingratiating character of Zeno himself.

The book is rich also in minor characters who, though apprehended only through the highly charged mentality of the hero, are nevertheless full-blooded and recognizable types. Another of its merits is Svevo's apparently inexhaustible storehouse of dry *aperçus*, a continuous scattering of apothegms which remind one of the cosmopolitan, terse wisdom of Chamfort or Rochefoucauld. Sometimes a bit of introspection will appear to open up enormous vistas of characterization, as when Zeno observes of his wife-to-be, "I liked her simple way of talking all the more because I myself could not open my mouth without misrepresenting things or people, for otherwise I should have seen no use in talking at all. Talking seemed to me an event in itself which must not be hampered by any other event".

Praise should be accorded to the translator, Beryl de Zoete, without whose sympathetic labors Svevo's masterpiece might have remained the property of a small coterie of Italian and French literati. Instead it becomes a book for all the world, one which must be placed on the shelf just below Don Quixote, and certainly in the company of the finest novels of our own day.

ADAM'S REST *by Sarah Gertrude Millin* (LIVERIGHT. $2.50)

IT BEGINS to look as though Mrs. Millin would share the unenviable position occupied by one-book authors such as Somerset Maugham and Frank Swinnerton. *Adam's Rest*, sincere and sympathetic as it is, inevitably induces, as have all Mrs. Millin's recent books, unfortunate comparisons with *God's Stepchildren*. It employs a somewhat similar South African provincial locale and is based (partially) on the same theme—miscegenation; but it lacks entirely the melodramatic power which won for the author's first book its sweeping and deserved popularity.

Adam's Rest recounts the life story of two sisters, Miriam and Janet Lincoln, who, in differing ways, adjust themselves to the narrow, quiet existence of their South African hamlet. Janet, unreflective and unambitious, is contrasted with her sister Miriam, in whom lie always the germ of dissatisfaction and the longing for wider horizons. Miriam's life, outwardly serene and comfortable, is divided against itself by three factors. All her attempts at romance and deeper living are balked by some member of the Crofts family—products of that miscegenation

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which Miriam has been taught to despise. Secondly, to the stolid Janet are born the eager and beautiful children which Miriam feels should have been hers. Finally, she is a woman cursed by an over-keen sense of the passage of time, rendered even more poignant by the slowness of the life around her.

The book reminds one irresistibly of *The Old Wives' Tale*; the two sisters have something of Constance and Sophia Baines in them. But Miriam never comes alive as do Bennett's heroines. The problems with which she is beset are exposed with delicacy and insight but the woman herself somehow remains a conventional figure. Only at the very end when, her daughter married, her beloved father dead and her youth irretrievably a part of the past, Miriam accepts her fate with a beautiful and fatigued resignation, does the book become more than merely interesting. The conviction returns upon one that too much of Mrs. Millin's creative passion was expanded in *God's Stepchildren*. Her succeeding productions, always well written, always readable, have nevertheless consistently lacked fire and energy.

CLIFTON P. FADIMAN

SEED: A NOVEL OF BIRTH CONTROL *by Charles G. Norris* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

WITH such an alarming sub-title we anticipate mournful accounts of drudging women struggling with diapers, howling brats, bills, and indifferent — possibly drunken — husbands. It is therefore a relief to find the first half of this book the annals of a healthy and well-to-do clan of Californians settled on a Santa Clara ranch. Of course some of the women have too many children, but the interest of the reader, such as it is, is not with them. The author does not get down to brass tacks until the third of his five books, when his hero Bart starts his matrimonial career. The rest is largely the account of Bart's life with his second wife, a Catholic, and a too-large family; his success as a novelist and his love affair with a literary New Yorker; his final reconciliation with his wife. At the end of the novel a doctor and a priest hold a symposium on birth control; and there are case histories from Bart's clan to be used on both sides of the question. You know, however, that the author sympathizes with his hero, who never would have left his wife if she had practised contraception.

The trouble with this, as with most problem novels, is divided interest. If the people "come alive", the thesis is bound to suffer, living people being seldom mere illustrations of anything. If the thesis rises triumphant, the people will be reduced to puppets. Mr. Norris, a conscientious and laborious workman (reported to have admitted the reading of two hundred books in preparation for this one!), seems aware of his difficulty, but despite his efforts to ride two horses, does not get the most out of either. His title will win him many immature readers; but with a pedestrian and humorless style, a rambling and unexciting plot, and carefully differentiated but charmless characters he offers too little of the emotional reward which a reader looks for in a novel. To those whose minds are already made up about birth control, his cases will bring no new light, and scarcely carry conviction one way or the other.

ALAN REYNOLDS THOMPSON

THE EDWARDIANS *by V. Sackville-West* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.00)

IT IS impossible to read *The Edwardians* without realizing how much it is influenced by Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* . . . or perhaps we should not say "influenced by" but "involved in". For Mrs. Woolf's Orlando is generally supposed to be Miss Sackville-West; and Miss Sackville-West's Sebastian is closely related to Orlando. Miss Sackville-West in fact is writing about herself at second hand, a process that is never likely to be successful. Nor is it entirely self at second

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hand, for Sebastian would seem to be composed as to one half of Orlando, and as to the other of those innumerable romantic young gentlemen with whom the Edwardian society novel itself was always modestly in labor. This Sebastian is a young duke, owner of Chevron (which is Knole, Miss Sackville-West's family home with its seven acres of roof, the "heroine" of *Orlando*). He is temperamental enough to revolt against his mother's friends—the Edwardian "fast set"—and against the future from which he cannot escape, the future of a great gentleman. On the other hand he loves Chevron, and hates the fact that first Oxford, then the Guards, and then season after season in London, must always be keeping him away from it.

The Edwardians is the most distinguished novel that has come out of England this year. And it is distinguished precisely because Sebastian, like the heroes of many a period novel, is less important than his circumstances. It says much for Miss Sackville-West's organization and for the deftness of her writing that, although he is always in danger of disintegrating, he is graceful and even dignified about not doing so. But this only means that the novel is not hopelessly one-sided. For it is in the re-creation of the society from which Sebastian wishes to escape that Miss Sackville-West succeeds so admirably. She writes of the end of an English *temps des équipages*, the last days of an aristocracy; a time when intrigue was a matter of politeness, and every commandment was broken but the eleventh; a time, perhaps the last in English history, when adultery was recognized but divorce was a social misdemeanor. The whole being of Miss Sackville-West's brilliant and hard and hypocritical society is centered in the confession that one of them makes towards the end of the book: —"We may not have been honest, but we did at least know how to behave". Another writer might have insisted upon certain obvious implications in this sentence. Miss Sackville-West insists upon nothing. There is no satire in this book and no irony, no evident reminiscence even, and no intrusion of history. Where fashions or scenery or furniture are concerned or the old broughams or the new motor-cars, Miss Sackville-West observes the strictest economy of description. Her conversation, again with the most sparing use of contemporary idiom, is an essential part of her structure. As for her characters, none of them, we are told, is wholly fictitious. This is true, but it has nothing to do with the truth of the story. For that some part of them was once alive is quite immaterial: the point is that they are alive.

When we consider that *Orlando* would never have been written without Miss Sackville-West, and that *The Edwardians* would probably not have been written without *Orlando*, some comparison between the two authors is inevitable, and it must be eventually a comparison between a major and a minor prose. But if a minor prose, Miss Sackville-West's is almost perfect of its kind. It has none of the surprise or the beauty or the power of Mrs. Woolf's best work, but it is instrumental, exactly adequate to its purpose. A good minor prose, such as this, is a rare thing in any generation; as far as the novel is concerned, it depends upon a controlled and certain imagination. And since her Edwardians are alive Miss Sackville-West's imagination needs no further witness: for not even Queen Anne is so dead as the youth of our parents, and no period so remote as that which immediately precedes our own.

PARTIES *by Carl Van Vechten* (KNOPF. $2.50)

LIKE a whole classification of literature from "The Feast of Trimalchio" onward, *Parties* promises entertainment, but offers something quite different and far more important. It should confound a certain dilettantist criticism which maintains that Van Vechten is an American love-child compounded between Firbank and Huysmans, with certain engag-

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ing qualities, but no originality. And it should establish what one believes to be the truth—namely that the body of Van Vechten's work, whether good, bad or indifferent, represents in its own way a modern comedy of manners; and that the same fate has befallen it which overtook an earlier comedy of manners; that it has been forced from the unmoral to the moral, not by outside influence (for the Jeremy Colliers of this world always appear after the event) but by inner compulsion.

The surface of this story is not unlike that of his other novels. Many of the characters are easily recognizable, their entrances brilliantly managed, their background cleverly constructed. The manner again is extravagant, and exaggerated, and witty, and somewhat satirical. But if the manner which presents the story is familiar, the emotion which informs it is unfamiliar; it is painful and violent and essentially moral; and because of it Van Vechten is more definitely creative than before, and the reading of his *Parties* an experience, not an entertainment.

The core of this story lies in the relationship between David and Rilda Westlake, always drunk, hardly seeing each other except at parties, but cursed, whatever they do and however they do it, with a "damnable fidelity"; and in this tortured relationship all the other characters are more or less involved. While the circumstances that surround it are fluid enough, the pattern that these characters form among themselves is like that of a *caelum stellatum*—a fixed motion. It is a matter of disgust and escape from disgust and disgust with the form of escape—on and on; in this path the more important characters are forced to go, and the others to follow, either because they wish to keep up with them, or because having drifted in they find it easier to stay where they are. The atmosphere—which is simply the difference between certain people who are confined to the same limited space—is almost to the end tense and powerful and rather disgusting.

"Almost to the end"—unfortunately. The story itself is excellently constructed, with the catastrophe of an inconvenient death, a shocked sobriety which almost provides the necessary escape, an inevitable return to the old way of life, and the ultimate resolution of "We're here because we're here, and we should be extremely silly not to make the worst of it". But the emotion which informed the better part of it cannot sustain itself to the end; there is a sudden loss of energy. The difference between what precedes and what follows this loss is not so peremptory as the terms in which it must be described. But it is actually the difference between creation and report, and incidentally the difference between a great novel and a good one. In respect to what it might have been, *Parties* is a failure because it is incomplete; but a failure significant enough to place Van Vechten once and for all among the more important of contemporary novelists; and significant enough for us to speculate about his future, when we had come to expect nothing more from him than a repetition of his past.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

MAURICE GUEST *by Henry Handel Richardson* (NORTON. $2.50)

THIS first novel by Henry Handel Richardson was originally published in 1908. Although it received enthusiastic praise from a handful of discriminating critics, it never attained popularity. On the other hand, it never passed entirely into oblivion. When the sudden success of *Ultima Thule*, the final volume of her ambitious and beautiful trilogy, thrust the name of Henry Handel Richardson into the limelight, *Maurice Guest* was resurrected from the state of suspended animation in which it had endured for twenty years. The present edition, carefully revised by the author and freed of its most glaring archaisms, is the result.

Widely different in setting from the Richard Mahony trilogy, *Maurice Guest* is

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very similar in mood. It is a study of failure, a portrait of a sensitive and gifted person, vitally ambitious, yet lacking the last ounce of vigor, ruthlessness, or pertinacity necessary to success. From the narrow and joyless routine of a provincial English household, Maurice Guest came to Leipzig for two precious years of study under the world's most famous music masters. He felt in himself the quality of genius and an almost frenzied will to bring it to realization. Yet music, the means and end of all his striving, became an insignificant half-god before the vision of Louise Dufrayer.

Louise, undeniably beautiful and talented, enjoyed local fame as the mistress of Eugen Schilsky, a wild young man, admittedly the finest violinist the Conservatory had produced in decades. The history of their love was tavern gossip. The details of Louise's passionate indiscretions and Schilsky's careless cruelties and infidelities were gleefully recited over the beer steins. Maurice Guest's romanticism, stifled by his dull and provincial youth, burst into flame. His love for Louise, compounded of pity and worship and desire, attained a half-reward after Schilsky's desertion. But the gentleness and humility of his devotion failed to erase from Louise's heart the memory of the adored and self-centered Schilsky, whose love had been confident and demanding, and whose genius had never been for a moment in doubt.

The safe and easy ways of life eluded Guest, the quiet love of Madeleine Wade, and the achievement to be bought with application. He was helpless, in spite of the dim realization of his folly, to avert destruction. Yet he attained, in a twisted fashion, the fame he had sought. After Schilsky's return to Leipzig and his marriage to Louise Dufrayer, Maurice Guest's memory lived on, linked by gossip with Mme Schilsky's in the epitaph: "An English chap shot himself on her account".

No one has depicted so ably as Henry Handel Richardson the bitterness and irony of failure. The chronicles of Maurice Guest and Richard Mahony will endure side by side as records of brilliant and pitifully wasted lives. But Richard Mahony is undoubtedly the greater characterization. The tortured and hypersensitive doctor is a less appealing figure than the romantic musician, but he is infinitely better conceived and more completely realized.

THE SILENCE OF COLONEL BRAMBLE *by André Maurois* (APPLETON. $2.50)

DURING the war, when André Maurois was serving as an interpreter with a British regiment at the front, he gathered the material for his first novel, *The Silence of Colonel Bramble*. It was published in Paris in 1918, and achieved an instantaneous success in Franch and England, particularly among the regimental officers whom it satirized so subtly and engagingly. Here, in translation by Thurfrida Wake and Wilfrid Jackson, with an introduction by Brand Whitlock, which is at once important and illuminating, it is presented for the first time to an American public.

The Silence of Colonel Bramble departs notably from the conventional definition of a novel. It resembles, in form, the discreetly edited private note-books of a witty, cultivated and gracefully disillusioned Frenchman attached to an English regiment and admitted to the friendship of its officers. The scene is, almost invariably, the mess hall of the regiment; the action, beyond conversation, is almost non-existent; the characters are obliquely described by means of their anecdotes, their expletives, their preferences in food and wine and phonograph records. The conversations bandied between the warlike padre, the erudite Dr. O'Grady, the argumentative Major Parker, and sympathetic, but slightly perplexed Aurelle, are punctuated always by the eloquent and often crushing silences of Colonel Bramble. The subject of the talk ranges heaven and earth,

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tapping a brilliant store of ancedotes and reminiscences, and returning perpetually to sport, politics, women, the respective national temperaments of the French and the English, and the peculiarities of the British War Office.

Thinly but agreeably disguised as fiction, *The Silence of Colonel Bramble* is really an essay on the English character—shrewd, ironic, charmingly, sometimes outrageously exaggerated, and with always a pungent flavor of truth. Aurelle's incisive descriptions of these English officers, with their coolness, their idealism, their dread of sentimentality, and, above all, their reticence which concealed a profound sentimentality, could have been written by none but a Frenchman, and a Frenchman, at that, who knew and understood England and Englishmen.

MARGARET WALLACE

STRANGERS MAY KISS *by Ursula Parrott* (CAPE & SMITH. $2.00)

URSULA PARROTT has produced a worthy successor to *Ex-Wife*. *Strangers May Kiss* deals again with the pseudo-Bohemians of New York—with men and women employed on newspapers and magazines, persons who consume vast amounts of gin and cognac, smoke cigarettes end on end, and sleep promiscuously around. Like the heroine of *Ex-Wife*, Lisbeth is a one-man woman whose deflections from the code of her youth seem to her to be forced upon her by the right lover's absence from the amorous scene. There are no side issues or bypaths in Lisbeth's thinking. She is the elemental woman stripped down to her need for love. Despite a degree from Wellesley and certain modern embellishments which she could not altogether escape, she is essentially a Patient Griselda or a Clarissa Harlowe, the beginning, middle, and end of whose existence is man. A little fool the heroine may be, but a fool who does not repent of her folly or resent the inevitable consequences.

Slight as it is, the story is well told; suspense is achieved; and the dialogue throughout is entertaining. The tempo is retarded, however, in the first part of the book by the intrusion of Lisbeth's diary and its amazing inclusion of the correspondence between Lisbeth and Alan. The death-bed scene at the end is not only melodramatic and forced, but needlessly cruel. The story's demand for an unhappy ending could have been more logically satisfied by Alan's failure to return to Lisbeth and by the prosaic compromise life so often presents. The characters in the story are convincingly drawn. In their portrayal Ursula Parrott injects bits of universal truth that give evidence of more than a superficial knowledge of the people about whom she is writing.

EUDORA RAMSAY RICHARDSON

BARON FRITZ *by Karl Federn* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $2.50)

HERE is a close-up of war from the vantage point of the commanding officers, German army officers. The reader will find in *Baron Fritz* none of the horrifying experiences of the rank and file of a war-crushed generation. Instead he will perceive in the hero a personification of that caste of petrified authority and leadership to whom the war was only a passing test, a perfunctory duty to be discharged without enthusiasm and without illusions, a mere matter of retaining one's prestige in a contest of experts. The appalling presumptions of a surfeited militarism meet their retribution. But brilliant and discerning minds like Baron Fritz's must chart the course of this retribution in colors of glory and hope. This is the bidding of everything that goes to make up the destiny of a functioning nobility; it is the dictate of the *amour-propre* of a class specializing in patriotism and heroism.

Baron Fritz Talbot Latour von Saint-Aubin is too probing, too gay, too incalculable and too human a spirit to feel com-

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fortable under the rigid discipline of his milieu. Hedged in on every side, his superior intelligence finds an outlet in highbrow mockery, contrariness, malicious pranks and refined bullying. It is all a pretence, of course. He does everything in a half-hearted way. His love adventures and most dashing escapades are tinged with ennui. His life is worse than tragic, it is pathetic. Yet the surge of its forces in his veins and brains is strong and unswerving. His last act is to yield to a "desire of the flesh" while on reconnoitring duty. "A bird singing sweetly far away, charmed me from my path"—he uses the words of an old French song, epitomizing his fate—and a shell makes that path a blind alley where Baron Fritz's erratic and imprisoned life comes to an abrupt end. Mr. Donald Douglas's excellent translation adds greatly to the vivid quality of the book.

QUEEN ANNE'S LACE *by Frances Parkinson Keyes* (LIVERIGHT. $2.00)

LIKE the brand of bread we are asked to buy, Frances Parkinson Keyes's latest novel has been prepared according to recipes of fifty thousand or so American housewives. Every home in the nation out of which a president may come and where "Society" and "The Woman's Page" are read with avidity and relish has contributed to this delectable concoction, whose main ingredients are "the three C's—cooking, clothes and culture", seasoned with such popular condiments as good looks and good luck, good citizenship and good patriotism. The last two reduced to their simplest forms, if the author's treatment of them is to serve as a criterion in the matter, are: veneration for Washington, D. C., and all it stands for in the ceremonial life of the nation; adulation of the president and adoration of his wife.

Indeed, *Queen Anne's Lace* is nothing if not the story of a first lady of the land. To the unshaken American belief that most of our great are born and reared on the farm is now added the supplemental credo that their wives likewise spring from the soil. The double-barreled purpose of the book, as indicated in its prologue, is, first, to show how much the part that a woman, and particularly a president's wife, has in her husband's career is misunderstood and underestimated, and, second, to offer "hundreds of women who are longing to help their husbands but feel that they are failing to do so consolation and encouragement in the story of Anne Chamberlain".

From the picking of the white meadow flowers known as Queen Anne's Lace, used to adorn the corsage of the heroine, to the moment when we are permitted to learn that she is to wear real lace, the lace of a queen, for her husband's inauguration as President of the United States—the unfolding of events in the narrative represents a careful, conscientious and morally impeccable fulfilment of the above purpose. What halts there are in the flow of bliss apportioned to our hero and our heroine are deliberate, inasmuch as they are utilized for initiating the fifty thousand American housewives who may hope to become Presidents' wives or Congressional Dames someday into the mysteries and "miseries" of social life in Washington.

LOUIS RICH

THE EARTH TOLD ME *by Thames Williamson* (SIMON & SCHUSTER. $1.00)

IT IS hard to see how this primitive story of the Alaskan tundra could be any better than it is—it is close to perfection. Of course you can say that Eskimos do not interest you, that Orulo, sleek, brown, plump as a seal, is not your sort of heroine, that comments on reindeer and magic interest you less than Mayfair chit-chat, that the falling of the great snows and the resurgence of the Arctic spring move you less than the Chrysler tower, and you have a right to your preferences. Orulo is the wife of Taliak, a reindeer

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herdsman. His apprentice is Akpek, a slightly sinister young fellow, who at a mission school has had contact with the whites and their impractical, romantic attitude toward women. He loves his master's wife. This insidious germ of love spreads from the lover to the husband. Taliak is tortured with jealousy, a white man's weakness he never before understood. He knows he should cast Orulo aside, for she is barren. And her barrenness curses his herd, which does not multiply freely. In spite of everything, he keeps her. Hate and love seem to move very slowly in the Eskimo's hut. The animosity between the two young men is veiled, hidden beneath parables and allegories. They have great patience. There are always in both minds the thoughts that Akpek is the caribou bull, a newcomer to the herd, Taliak the old spotted bull and Orulo the barren doe—who should be butchered. The book is steeped in primitive animism.

The story is very powerful and very beautiful. It carries with it a curious, undebatable authority. It is thus and thus Eskimos herd, amuse themselves, drink, eat, hate, love. You would believe *The Earth Told Me* rather than the whole Smithsonian Institution. But it is no mere anthropological report. It is a true work of art, simple and wonderful.

WILD BEAUTY *by Mateel Howe Farnham* (DODD, MEAD. $2.00)

FANNY, social nobody, daughter of an eccentric German music master, marries into the local royal house of Brownbeck. These in-laws of hers are all but feudal rulers of a small provincial eastern city. They have (from their point of view) every reason for disliking the charming, too-good-looking, casual wife of their David. The fight is on. The embattled Brownbecks on the one side, Fanny on the other. At first, the Brownbecks win every skirmish: David forced to work in the family bank—and live in the family house. Fanny forced to elope—Fanny divorced, losing custody of the child. But the tide of battle turns—to the relief of the reader, for certainly all our sympathies are with the amusing, likable Fanny. The child prefers mother to the Brownbecks. David sees through his family's malicious interference. He never stops loving Fanny—hunts her up and remarries her. But if you call this a happy ending, you know far less of life than the astute Miss Farnham. For she knows that after years of separation and bitterness the second marriage is but a cold ghost of former happy years.

This is a dramatic and convincing story of why people marry and get divorced and remarry, and of how love changes and human nature changes, and of how little that is once lost is ever recaptured. If you get any sort of kick out of hearing some one say, "My dear, I don't think the Williamses (or the Wilkenses or the Whipples) are getting on any *too* well together, and the reason is . . ." get this book and read it.

ESTHER FORBES

RIDE THE NIGHTMARE *by Ward Greene* (CAPE & SMITH. $2.00)

MR. GREENE'S first novel, *Cora Potts*, received generous acclaim and readers were urged to watch its author. His new novel, *Ride the Nightmare*, is a sleight-of-hand performance that is odd and puzzling. The author's intention seems frequently to change: did he intend a satiric and serious Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man in America—or is his novel intended as a lampoon of the Sad Young Man? Mr. Greene's facility and his equal abilities in "straight" writing and burlesque humor leave his intentions in doubt and his characters unrealized.

The central figure of his story is Jake Perry, a young Southerner whose belief in himself is pathological. He lights out from home at a tender age and dares God to strike him down. He has a vagabond career as a newspaper man and cartoonist in the Richard

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Harding Davis days of journalism in the Deep South; he marries Old Man Wimbish's heiress and becomes an advertising man and plays in the country-club set until a scandal of his own making and his cosmic boredom spoil his pleasure in that town. After the war, Greenwich Village, where he becomes a "typical villager" in overalls and a béret; later he becomes a comic strip cartoonist—whose drawings are received as brilliant satire by the intellectuals—and an amateur in erotic-sadist adventures. Always there is Beth, his lovely, loving wife, who has got over being hurt by his notorious infidelities and who loves him because is "like a boy", a "boy-man". When she can no longer endure his cruelty, insults and dishonesties, she leaves him, only to return when he attempts suicide and his mistress sends for her.

The characters, including Jake, are puppets carefully manipulated. Mr. Greene as puppet-master has some interesting things to say, some brilliant lines, some hard-boiled judgments in the best contemporary tradition. But one is allowed to think that he believes his characters real. Caricatures, however, are spoiled when they are retouched to be portraits. Mr. Greene has talent; there are some good chapters in *Ride the Nightmare* (good in both his manners of writing)—and there are some that are rankest tabloid in conception and in writing; glamorous, one believes, in intention, but scandalous, if not libellous, in effect. The incident of "the loveliest Mimi", is perhaps even below the tabloid level—at least no tabloid, so far as I know, has printed it.

COLEY TAYLOR

THE TRAP *by Delfino Cinelli, with an introduction by Carl Van Doren* (JOHN DAY. $2.50)

THIS story of intrigue, jealousy, and the fundamental human emotions is written in a fine dark Italian hand. It is the story of Crab's murderously passionate love for the beautiful town-wench whom he has married and brought to his little shop in a Tuscan village. Unhappily she is attracted to the young Marchese, Paolo Martorelli, Lord of ancient lands, who is impressed with her charms. Then Stefano, the Iago of this piece, comes along, nursing an old grievance against Crab. And he contrives the trap.

Carl Van Doren, in his otherwise dignified introduction, says: "Crab, victim to Stefano, is also trap to Paolo and trapper to himself". . . . That sounds familiar and ancient. Do we hear Iago muttering, "I have 't. It is engend'red. Hell and night Must bring this monstrous birth to the world's light"?

Not that the "eminent" Italian novelist has given birth to a monster. A new version of a story that belongs to the best Italian traditions cannot be contemned, and this is a novelette with a rather cleverly renovated plot. The emphasis on situation is undue, almost absurd, and the story is rendered as unsuccessful as a muscle-bound lover. For the rest, there is no memorable creation of character, no sudden speech to rouse us from the repose that a vaguely familiar story induces. *The Trap* was awarded the Mondadori Prize in Italy; the translation is by the author.

CHARLES A. PEARCE

EROICA: A NOVEL BASED ON THE LIFE OF LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN *by Samuel Chotzinoff* (SIMON & SCHUSTER. $2.50)

UNCOUTH, coarse, a veritable old bear, Beethoven died broken-hearted, unloved, unwed, even hated—yet his last act, so characteristic of the man throughout his turbulent lifetime, was to defy Heaven itself. As he lay mortally ill, a thunderstorm broke over the house in which he lay; and in the agony of his last breath, the unruly genius of immortal music raised his right arm and with clenched fist waved an impotent gesture toward the sky, while the thunder pealed and lightning flashed at his window.

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Mr. Chotzinoff, who is known to readers of the New York *World* for his musical criticisms, has accumulated all the material extant which relates to the man, and his novel is compact of all the essential facts. A few remarkable incidents in Beethoven's life have been omitted, but for the most part the novelist-biographer has shown excellent taste in the arrangement, has not overstepped the bounds of credulity in arranging situations which are built upon exceedingly slight documents, and has managed to round out a full-bodied, convincing life of a titan. It is not surprising to find, therefore, that the book is less of a novel than of a biography, but a biography more deeply probing than Ludwig's recent brilliant portrait.

The author has striven to outline four outstanding influences in the life of the great musician: the early background in the cultured home of Madame von Breuning; Beethoven's passion for the Immortal Beloved; his deafness; and his "almost pathological love" for his worthless nephew Carl, a boy whose life was made utterly miserable by the famous uncle who was by turns gushingly sentimental and brutally abusive. Another feature of the book is Mr. Chotzinoff's very accurate picture of the constant struggle of the vain and ugly musician with life about him—the struggle of an impassioned genius to understand and cope with the petty routine of domestic affairs. Sometimes one almost wonders whether or not Beethoven actually was mentally competent in his dealings with such matters. Beethoven of the bawdy house, Beethoven accursed with a scandalous disease, Beethoven the quarrelsome brother, Beethoven the meddler in other people's affairs, Beethoven the inexplicable, proud, surging river of musical genius, Beethoven of a few fleeting and supremely felicitous moments—this is the matter of which Mr. Chotzinoff's *Eroica* is compounded. The reading of this book is an unforgettable experience.

R. P. HARRISS

THE LITTLE DOG LAUGHED *by Leonard Merrick* (DUTTON. $2.50)

IF THE greater number of characters in Mr. Merrick's collection of short stories, under the illuminating title of *The Little Dog Laughed*, are not drawn from life, then there should be created immediately some men and women in their image. Thus would the world become a more human place, for these delightful Leonard Merrick folk, though they are continually jumping over serio-comic moons, invariably tumble to earth after their adventures a bit richer for their flights. Worldly wisdom sans even a suggestion of what we so delicately label hard-boiledness is Mr. Merrick's most endearing characteristic. It has that Gallic grace which makes knowledge not an arbitrary thing but the bony structure upon which to hang the sweet fripperies and the fine intensity of daily life. These puppets are not all exemplary or high-bred or thrilling, but they have pulses that beat, and that, as they themselves would remark, swells the heart.

Mr. Merrick has for years been called "the writers' writer"—whatever that may mean. We venture the opinion that he is the writer for everyone who appreciates in fiction that combination of pity, irony and gay laughter which is of classic origin. In these new tales shines the same talent that made *A Chair on the Boulevard* a literary treat, and the author still achieves the miracle of making one word do duty for three.

Of the brief romances, the tragedy of Lulu, who, when her "protector" marries her out of gratitude, reforms herself into such bourgeois dulness that he is driven from her who was once his fond excitement into other arms, surely brings one face to face with the sport of the gods. "The Vengeance of Monsieur Duripon" acquaints us with a mild little man who is urged by the world to avenge his honor by killing the lion-tamer who has stolen his wife, and who is saved either from murder or utter funk by the fact

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that when he overtakes the sinful pair the lion-tamer has elected to sleep, that night, in the cage with his beasts rather than listen to his dear virago. A youthful affair, "I Recall a Seat", might propose itself (if someone helped it along) to the master-minds of Hollywood as the nucleus of a neat little comedy.

Sir James Barrie has suggested somewhere that he would be very happy to have written some of Mr. Merrick's short stories—a decoration with palms and a criticism in itself.

LYNN ANDERSON

THE GOVERNOR OF MASSACHUSETTS *by Elliot Paul* (LIVERIGHT. $2.00)

WRITTEN in a style whose charm is not at once appreciated, this novel is an elegiac reconstruction of an epoch in American life that has vanished as absolutely as the standards on which it was based. The Boston of thirty years ago is not really so far away from us that a work using it for a background can properly be called historical. Yet such is the quality of the life that Mr. Paul here so tenderly reproduces that it is in many respects more dissimilar from our own than that of several much earlier periods. The problem for the writer's imagination is not a shortening but an artificial lengthening of the perspective. So well has Mr. Paul succeeded, that this chronicle of the Puritan dusk has something of the remoteness, the strangeness, the beauty even, which we associate ordinarily only with the distant past. One is reminded of those somewhat eclectic compositions that Charles Burchfield has drawn around the same period: the row of implacable brownstone houses, the large lady pursued by her bustle down the sedate avenue, the waiting automobile of prehistoric design. The important difference is that the effect Mr. Paul desires to produce is not nearly so flattering to our sense of contemporary superiority. In the career of Elijah Griffin, small manufacturer and landowner, is represented the dramatic clash of a whole set of ideals—moral, social, and political—with a new order that is already beginning to forget their names. Excitement is provided by the series of unexpected circumstances by which this simple, honest and dignified man is unwillingly dragged into the labyrinthine vulgarity of American politics. An effective contrast is the result of the studiously tranquil style being applied to such essentially raucous incidents as surround the election of a governor in the commonwealth of Massachusetts. In most respects this is the most satisfactory political novel that has been written in this country in a great many years and for that reason alone deserves all the encouragement belonging to a type on its way to becoming entirely obsolete. Another reason is that it possesses a natural distinction of style and treatment which sets it apart from the majority of novels belonging to any type at the present moment.

WILLIAM TROY

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BIOGRAPHY

THE LIFE OF MADAME ROLAND *by Madeleine Clemenceau-Jacquemaire* (LONGMANS, GREEN. $4.00)

A LADY WHO LOVED HERSELF: THE LIFE OF MADAME ROLAND *by Catherine Young* (KNOPF. $4.00)

IN Madame Roland, Madeleine Clemenceau-Jacquemaire found a subject which could not but have appealed to a daughter of Georges Clemenceau. Had her famous father lived at the time of the Revolution he would certainly have started as a member of the Gironde, and it is altogether probable that he would have frequented the salon of its Egeria. That he would long have put up with the vacillating temperaments of such of its leaders as Brissot, Vernigaud, Pétion, and Isnard, is altogether doubtful; and it might be fascinating to consider what might have happened had Clemenceau and Danton met on the benches of the Convention. At all events they would have understood each other. But what is certain is that with all his cynicism Clemenceau would have appreciated the force and the courage of the one true heroine the Revolution produced, just as it is certain that he would have bowed to her beauty and her charm. Madame Roland's supreme mistake was in her dislike of Danton, a dislike which in itself proved her femininity. Danton's ugliness and vulgarity revolted her, and the result was that she rebuffed the repeated offers of alliance from the one man who could have saved France from Robespierre and the Terror. Danton the patriot and Danton the man of action knew that Madame Roland was the one member of the Gironde capable of leadership and he became her enemy only when she had insisted that it be so.

Manon-Jeanne Phlipon, who afterwards became the wife of M. Roland de la Platière, was of course a bluestocking, but she was and ever will be an inspiration to those who believe in "nobility of soul". In her letters and her utterances there is much use of the word "virtue", but unlike many of the eighteenth-century philosophers and pamphleteers who were forever employing that word, Madame Roland meant it and lived it to the utmost meaning of the term. Desperately in love with Buzot, she remained faithful to the aging husband whom she admired and to whom she had sworn fidelity. When urged to escape she wrote: "I will neither disguise myself nor go hence. If they wish to kill me they can do it here. I owe this example of strength and I will give it". Never once through her long imprisonment did she falter. The tears she shed were for her husband, for the man she loved, for her daughter, and above all else for her tortured country. Her lifelong adoration of Plutarch and of the heroes of ancient Rome was with her no idle dream. If ever there was a Roman matron in the grand meaning of the term Manon-Jeanne Roland was one. She, all woman, was yet the one complete man of her party, the purest spirit which the Revolution produced, and except in her hatred of Danton, one of its clearest intellects. It is this woman who lives again in the pages of Mme Clemenceau-Jacquemaire's admirable biography, which has been sympathetically translated by Laurence Vail.

Of Catherine Young's *A Lady Who Loved Herself* far less can be said. To those who love and know Madame Roland the title itself might be enough to condemn it. The book itself is little better. Its picture of Madame Roland's early life is adequate enough,

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but the great period of the Revolution is hurried over as if it did not count. Of Madame Roland's importance to France, of her relations to her friends and her enemies, of any attempt to picture either these friends or enemies, the book is intolerably barren. It is evident that Miss Young had little real sympathy and apparently little interest in the woman she set out to paint. Half through the book and just when she reached the drama and meaning of the story, the biographer seems suddenly to have grown tired of the whole thing and completes the tale as if it were something to be got through quickly. It is a pity, for Miss Young shows that when she wishes to she knows how to write.

MADAME DE MAINTENON *by Maud Cruttwell* (DUTTON. $5.00)

MISS CRUTTWELL is an enthusiast, and she believes so implicitly in the object of her enthusiasm that she disdains to descend to the least suppression of a fact, even when that fact might to the average reader hold implications not altogether favorable to her heroine. That Madame de Maintenon's moral character while she was the wife of Scarron may have been all that it should have been is very possible, but Miss Cruttwell's angry denials of the charges made against Madame Scarron by Saint-Simon and others would have more weight if she could have produced something more than her own opinion. Then again Miss Cruttwell tries to minimize Madame de Maintenon's responsibility for the disastrous War of the Spanish Succession, despite the fact that she acknowledges that her vote was cast at the final conference for placing the king's son on the Spanish throne. And if there is no evidence that Louis's morganatic wife encouraged him in his extravagance there is little evidence that she showed any realization of where it was really leading. Her opposition to her husband's vagaries was in fact based solely on her fear for his immortal soul and not at all on any feeling for what was good for France. It is most amusing to see how beautifully Miss Cruttwell brings this out without showing the slightest evidence of appreciating how it stultifies the object of her adoration. And yet it brings out, too, the utterly feminine soul of one of the most unusual women France ever produced, a woman who in her own narrow sphere was a paragon of steadfastness.

Yet smile as we enlightened and liberated souls of the nineteenth century may at Madame de Maintenon's absorption in the things of the next world at the expense of the misery around her, the character of Françoise d'Aubigné, later Madame Scarron, and finally wife of the Sun-King, remains, given her lights, one of extraordinary purity of purpose. Few more unselfish women have ever lived, and as Miss Cruttwell says, the epoch of Louis XIV might very well but for her have shared "the shameful stigma of those of Nero and Sardanapalus". She may have done little to restrain Louis in his foreign wars or even in his domestic extravagances, though she certainly did not encourage the latter, and Miss Cruttwell makes it pretty clear that the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was not her doing, but she certainly did succeed in gradually purifying the licentiousness of the court. Without her influence the latter days of Louis might have rivalled the degradation of the Regency which succeeded him. Miss Cruttwell's *Life* gives the facts of Madame de Maintenon's career, and even if her style is at times slovenly and her dislike of commas disconcerting, it is a readable and interesting book.

GRENVILLE VERNON

CONTEMPORARY IMMORTALS *by Archibald Henderson* (APPLETON. $2.50)

DR. HENDERSON'S vocation is mathematics; his avocation appears to be introducing himself to geniuses and geniuses to each other. Now, after a lifelong study of super-people he announces his candidates for eternal

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fame. *Contemporary Immortals* sounds his challenge to time and oblivion on behalf of a round dozen of mixed celebrities. In his preface Dr. Henderson falters at his temerity at making the portentous choice, but he need not fear. At least half his favorites would be endorsed by every commercial and technical school in the country, and all would have an excellent chance with the average newspaper reader.

The essays themselves have the competence, if not quite the spirit, of newspaper articles, but the reader who looks for a more clairvoyant and individual reading of the immortals will be disappointed. The evaluation of the inventor-mechanic-cum-captain-of-industry type is extremely commonplace, the analysis of the "incalculable modicum" of genius in the creative examples unilluminating, while of Gandhi and Mussolini, we are given the official portraits with which the future will have nothing to do.

Shaw has written himself so copiously that it is a rash commentator who enlarges on the theme; and although Dr. Henderson compares him with Ibsen, Voltaire, Barnum, Swift, Molière, Sophocles, Bunyan, Blake, Butler, Hardy, Nietzsche, Bergson, Wells, Knox and Fox, he leaves us no wiser than before. Paderewski is overestimated as a liberator, and Kipling underestimated as a poet. And the remarks attributed to the galaxy are more trite than even the supremest intelligences have a right to be. The author writes with a sincere admiration of his immortals but this branch of biography must always be tame in comparison with portraits of those immortals who, being dead, have begun to face the wear and tear of immortality.

The subject matter of *Contemporary Immortals* however, must excite speculation in the reader. Everybody must be curious to know how these great reputations will have fared fifty years hence. Since men are forgetful and history austere it is most probable that of the twelve Einstein will have begun to partake of the immortality of Newton; Marconi and Edison of that of Ampère and Watt; Mme Curie will rank with Lister; Orville Wright with Stephenson; Paderewski with any great virtuoso; while of the enigmas now enjoying the limelight in Italy and India it is vain to prophesy. Shaw and Kipling will survive if the power of their writing outlasts the problems and patriotism that inspired it. If Jane Addams achieves immortality she will be the first so honored for social well-doing. And if Mr. Ford is among the deathless by reason of incalculable riches, he will be the second in his class, the name of the first being Crœsus. But certainly, if these are not all immortal in their own right, Dr. Henderson's pen will not make them so.

OLGA KATZIN

LONE COWBOY *by Will James* (SCRIBNER'S. $2.75)

THAT life which every normal boy dreams of as the ultimate career for man has been Will James's very own. From the time he was born in a covered wagon until today when, looking conspicuously like a motion-picture hero, he has become the author of a neat row of books (illustrated by himself) about life on the range, the portrait he presents is a typical American one—a horseman of the "open spaces"; and the panorama of his particular West is vivid and unspoiled. When he insists that now, in 1930, he can lead the doubting Thomases to thousands of miles of wide open country and show them great herds of wild horses and longhorn cattle, we rejoice. This is the West we want to keep.

Autobiographically presented, we have here the story of a forthright citizen who at four could stick in a saddle, at eight was a trapper, and at nine was on his own. After that we meet Mr. James variously as cowboy, rustler, pony-buster, jailbird, soldier, movie-rider, author and artist, and—one must not forget—master of "Smoky", famous equine protagonist of many a fine tale.

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The author adopts the Will Rogers manner of narrative which, while undeniably in character, produces an ambling literary gait instead of a swift galloping one. However, we question if Mr. James's large public will find anything but joy in his drawl and in his simplified grammar.

As one might surmise from its genre *Lone Cowboy* exhibits a total lack of that "frustration, cynicism and despair" which by all the rules should be present to mark it as a product of today. Instead, the author almost disconcertingly appears to have found the game worth the candle. Even his sins lack the bright, authentic scarlet. His horse-thieving is easily forgivable, and never for a moment are those ladies of the dance-hall in peril from any inflamed passion in this kindly, contemplative cowboy. No; somehow the thrills seem slightly denatured. But the charm of the book as a picture of an enviable life remains inescapable.

LYNN ANDERSON

ANDROMEDA IN WIMPOLE STREET *by Dormer Creston* (DUTTON. $3.00)

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING: LETTERS TO HER SISTER, 1846-1859 *edited by Leonard Huxley* (DUTTON. $5.00)

ANY reader interested in obtaining a fresh, vivid, and unusually complete account of the familiar and justly famous Browning romance will find these two volumes excellently calculated to provide it. Miss Dormer Creston has retold in a loosely biographic form the story of the singular courtship in which England's most distinguished woman poet, a pale and interesting invalid, already in her thirty-eighth year, was so dramatically wooed by the romantic and impassioned Browning, six years her junior and still very much her inferior in the matter of literary reputation. The events of Elizabeth's childhood and youth at Hope End, the complications of the Barrett household, dominated by the affectionate but ridiculously autocratic father, Edward Barrett Moulton-Barrett, are employed by Miss Creston chiefly as a framework for the love story. This story, the most sentimentally perfect one afforded by the history of English letters, is related largely through excerpts from the Barrett-Browning correspondence, since no biographer, however skilful, could be expected to improve upon the account left to us by those talented and supremely articulate lovers.

Mr. Huxley, in an excellent edition of the hitherto unpublished letters from Elizabeth Barrett Browning to her sister Henrietta, takes up the story at the point of the elopement to Italy. This long, affectionate, and intimate correspondence gives us a charming picture of the Brownings's married life, of a tender and idyllically happy connection, shadowed somewhat by the persistent disapproval of Mr. Moulton-Barrett, but agreeably smoothed by Elizabeth's money, and by a subsidy from that amiable patron of the arts, John Kenyon. The letters have been discreetly, but not harshly, edited. They provide an entertaining commentary, not only upon the minor details of the Browning ménage, but also upon the interesting, sentimental and curiously dependent quality of Elizabeth's mind.

MARGARET WALLACE

LETTERS AND FRIENDSHIPS OF CECIL SPRING-RICE *by Stephen Gwinne* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $12.50)

SPRING-RICE'S professional achievements, as revealed in this skilful compilation of private and official correspondence, would appear to belong for the most part to the category of fine reporting. Such reporting, exploited by cabinet officers or chief executives, may well be the highest desideratum, or one of the highest, in a diplomat's career. Policy is dependent upon facts which are in turn dependent upon authentic observation.

As an observer of the political scene, its underlying causes as well as its outward char-

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acter, Spring-Rice seldom if ever fails to communicate a sense of unusual reliability. He brings to his work a conscientiousness, a knowledge and insight, which tend to lift personal opinion to the level of scientific history. The letters are principally from America, Germany, and Russia, though Spring-Rice's career embraced posts in Turkey, Persia, and Sweden as well. Certain qualities pervade both his official and private communications. These qualities are conspicuously those of one who delights in the combined rôles of political seer and prophet. The correspondence with Theodore Roosevelt, which is throughout of importance to Americans, is filled with acute, sometimes crucial, comments upon contemporary tendencies and events. The correspondence with Roosevelt also demonstrates a talent common to both men: that of prophetic discernment, the speculative arrangement of events far into the future. It is in this latter field, the field of statesmanship, that Spring-Rice remains a controversial figure, a man of uncertain worth. For a score of years, his friends now declare, Spring-Rice warned his country and his official superiors against the menace of Germany. Yet as late as 1911, Asquith thought his arguments "hysterical".

At Washington, from 1913 to 1918, as British Ambassador, Spring-Rice's declared object was to keep the English-speaking nations together in a common devotion to liberty, against a common threat of military dominance. History decreed the accomplishment of this object. Strangely enough, the result by no means gives Spring-Rice a clear position in the sequence of events. One must, no doubt, await the verdict of historians preoccupied with Anglo-American relations in their extraordinary complexity at this time.

Spring-Rice was temperamentally antipathetic to President Wilson. As Ambassador, he was from the beginning considered a disciple of Roosevelt and Lodge in their interpretations of American feeling and prospective events. The letters here noticed show that Spring-Rice tried earnestly to free his official reports from personal bias; but in the very necessity for this striving there was no small injury to his value as Ambassador. It is a thing to be marvelled at that his appointment was approved originally on both sides of the ocean and that his portfolio lasted so long.

Something in the nature of tragedy attaches to the closing chapters of the Ambassador's career. His prolonged nervous tension, his always precarious health, left little strength with which to meet ultimate adversity. Mr. Balfour's visit to Washington, Lord Reading's abrupt appointment to succeed Spring-Rice, Woodrow Wilson's final interview with the latter, seem to mark stages in the unfolding of a tragic play.

Stephen Gwinne shows admirable taste and restraint in dealing with this last phase of his kinsman's career. He has made out of a compilation a portrait more vital than that which emerges from most biographies.

ARMAND BURKE

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POETRY

THE BRIGHT WORLD *by Charles Norman* (MORROW. $2.00)

THERE are in this book perhaps thirty lines of poetry as fine as anything that has appeared in English since *Angels and Earthly Creatures*. At his best, Mr. Norman reaches up into that high clear impersonality, amounting to imaginative clairvoyance, of which Elinor Wylie gave us the most recent familiar example; and if he does not long sustain himself at such altitudes he keeps at any rate the mood and manner of one who has been there. He may some day return to stay.

The present volume seems farther from maturity than it actually is, not only because it contains a small amount of rather boyish writing such as that in the title-poem, but also because Mr. Norman is still experimenting, rather interestingly, with verse forms. Another reason lies in the fact that a tone of settled melancholy, not immediately distinguishable from that which we associate with later adolescence, sounds throughout it. The author admits that he goes "mourning within himself he knows not what", yet he makes the cause of his melancholy clear enough to his readers. He is one of the few contemporary poets who have dared to face and phrase that terrible loneliness of the modern mind which all must feel whenever they cease to deafen themselves with barbarous noises. He has discovered the truth, well known to Leopardi and Alfred de Vigny and James Thomson, that man does indeed live unto himself alone. This realization deepens and darkens all his thought, and he is constantly aware

> of that forlorn grey lady, Loneliness,
> whose noiseless footfalls pace beside my own.

We cannot charge Mr. Norman, therefore, with a deliberate and luxurious melancholy. He has encountered a sorrow which is noble because it is not his alone but all men's, and which, in its extreme poignancy, is peculiar to recent times. All that he says about this solitude has the accent of familiarity. Thus:

> There are more lonely things than loneliness
> or lonely people seen upon the street:
> I mean the figures prowling in the mind
> who break the windows of deserted houses,
> and images that have no form in words;
> something of desolate magnificence
> that stands within the mind like China's wall
> or the white pillars of Persepolis.

Such loneliness may take the extreme form of solipsism, and Mr. Norman is steadily occupied with the inner pageant. It may be attributed to a personal loss. Again, it may be due to what Nietzsche called the "great loathing" of a mind that strives toward distinction for the smug mediocrity about it. This mood has found few more successful expressions than Mr. Norman's sonnet:

> Down, spirit of loathing, in vain dost thou
> Loom like a grisly spectre in the air;
> Down, beast, get thee down: whom dost thou seek to cow?
> The troops of motley gather everywhere
> In disarray, a loathsome swarming host
> That scorns what it hath ever lacked the skill
> To make; and all that once was honored most,
> Virtue and gentleness, bends to its will.
> Come, O warriors on elephants,
> That sacked the golden cities of the East,
> To storm the citadels of ignorance;
> Come now, when all their vaunt that is pride's priest
> Gestures with gloating; now, when their vile bands
> Harass the unforgotten, happy lands.

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This mood and utterance, though it may seem old-fashioned, is none the worse for it. Mr. Norman belongs to a tradition that goes back, if not much more than a hundred years, at least far more than the decade or two in which many contemporary poets are content to strike root. He has a developed technique, a style sufficiently individual, and a deep thing to say.

THE BRIDGE *by Hart Crane* (LIVERIGHT. $2.50)

IT SEEMS possible, although one hesitates to assert it, that Mr. Crane's intention in writing this long ambitious poem was to represent the America of the twentieth century. If he did indeed set out to discover us, then he is in one respect like Columbus—into whose mouth he forces here a most incredible tirade—who confused America all his life with a totally different continent. In any case, "recorders ages hence" will do well to use this report upon us with extreme caution. We are not nearly so insane with noise and haste, nor are we even so hag-ridden by machinery, as Mr. Crane would give the ignorant future, glad to believe the worst of us, to suppose. One cannot characterize a time and land, any more satisfactorily than one can classify an animal, by merely naming its diseases. Neither can one describe a country three thousand miles wide and three hundred years old without taking longer views into time and space than those offered by the Woolworth Building. Mr. Crane has indeed heard of an American hinterland, and he writes five stanzas about the Mississippi that are the best stanzas in his book because they are the least strident, but in imagination he never gets farther west than Brooklyn Bridge or closer to the twentieth century than Walt Whitman. Such characterization of America from the point of view of New York City has advantages in the saving of time and effort, but these advantages should be left to visiting foreigners.

Like most persons who feel that the world's great age is beginning anew, Mr. Crane is much excited by and about machinery. He is excited by everything that moves very fast or makes a very loud noise, and when he can have both speed and noise at once, as in the crash of an airplane or the rush of a subway express, his excitement overcomes his powers of coherent expression. His own verse makes a constant succession of loud noises, pulling itself along like a gasoline engine by a series of explosions, and it sometimes moves so rapidly that he seems to be writing three or four sentences at once. One would say that he has taken quite seriously the remark made years ago by Mr. Ezra Pound: "It is poetry's job to catch up".

Of course it is hard work for poetry to catch up with the gasoline engines, the pile-drivers, the trip-hammers, and the riveting machines, and this may be the reason why Mr. Crane lashes and spurs a fancy already jaded. He rejects every natural association of ideas as commonplace; every phrase that might have been written in a normal mood by a normal mind he must torture beyond recognition. At the end of this thought-process, which begins with false principles and proceeds with frenzy in the wrong direction, we get such bombastic nonsense as this apostrophe to Brooklyn Bridge:

Oh Thou steeled Cognizance whose leap commits
The agile precincts of the lark's return;
Within whose lariat sweep encinctured sing
In single chrysalis the many twain—
Of stars thou art the stitch and stallion glow.

In a quotation from the London *Times* printed on the dust-cover of this volume we are told: "Mr. Crane reveals that his originality is profound". Let us grant this, since it does not much matter to literature and seems to matter a great deal to Mr. Crane. Still, it is surely the business of poetry to "reveal" something much more important than the originality of those who write it. The author's

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concern in this book should have been, presumably, to reveal something about America. His failure to do so may be attributed to his preoccupation with his own originality.

Mr. Crane explicitly claims intellectual descent from Walt Whitman, but he is a better poet than this would indicate. Had he been quite true to his Whitmanism he would have chosen not Brooklyn Bridge, striding high and clean through the light and knowing where it goes, as his symbol of America, but the crowded subway car, the load of human jelly dragged and pummelled and hurled willy-nilly through screaming darkness, uttering odds and ends of inanity, putting all its feeble faith in machines. Mr. Crane has described that subway car in terms that seem to express a creditable loathing, but we should expect the true followers of Whitman to find in it the symbol of their dearest hopes. If Mr. Crane were entirely consistent he would probably choose as the most perfect symbol for his machine-mad America, nothing less catastrophic than his own crashing airplane, which he watches:

Now eagle-bright, now
quarry-hid, twist-
ing, sink with
Enormous repercussive list-
ings down
Giddily spiralled
gauntlets, upturned, unlooping . . .
down gravitation's
vortex into crashed
. . . dispersion . . . into mashed and shapeless
debris.

ODELL SHEPARD

WHITE APRIL *by Lizette Woodworth Reese* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $1.50)

WHEN we say that a poetry is simple, we mean that it is intensely active, that this activity is directed toward a clear resolution of complex and conflicting emotions, and that it expresses itself by giving a full meaning to familiar words. The difference in the expression of major and minor "simple" poetry is a difference in the fulness of meaning, but there is the same difficulty behind the creation and to a greater extent behind the understanding of them, and this difficulty lies in the familiarity of the word, since the familiar word, by long and lazy abuse, has been drained of its vitality and become a mass of worthless associations and suggestions. A poet like Miss Reese, who writes with a clear imagery and a firm and sparing use of words, and whose virtue lies in her uncommon response to common influences, is always restoring life to the words she uses, words that have been consistently misused in a great deal of verse for a great many years.

In this, as in her previous books, Miss Reese's poetry is generally the communication of her experience before the common things of the countryside; she employs the ordinary lyric form with the slightest personal variations; and her real problem is to control her words and not to be controlled by them. There are whole poems, and certain verses in other poems, where she has not been successful, as for instance in the last verse of "Words"—

Here is a music,
In which a man knows,
He may babble of Homer
Or a rose.

which has no *real* meaning. But when she writes of the Cornish towns—

Gritting hard on the wind
And the heather smells. . .

and in "Heat"—

Dropping like soot the mulleins show,
All their white fire snuffed out. . .

and in "A Windy Night"—

For here the bellowing lanes are out;
Roofs crack; each window is a cry;

she is using her words fully enough for the familiar things to be unfamiliar because of their reality. At her best she can write about

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wind and rain and frost and roses and lilac, and these words, in relation to their context, have a proper meaning, not a number of easy and delightful and tragic and magical and sentimental associations which ultimately cancel each other out to nothing at all. At her best, then, she creates in the living word, and her long and honorable record is witness to it.

FIRST AND SECOND POEMS *by Ruth Pitter* (DOUBLEDAY, DORAN. $2.50)

THE singular importance of Miss Pitter's work lies in its relationship to Elizabethan poetry and, within Elizabethan poetry, to that of Spenser in particular. This relationship arises, not from imitation, but from a well-defined attitude toward poetry, so well defined as to be quite by itself today. In general it is an attitude toward the cultivation of poetry, which is behind almost all Elizabethan verse, however anonymous and however occasional. These lines of Miss Pitter's speak for themselves:

> The buried heart burneth
> Like summer in the snow,
> That the blossom turneth
> From its sweet sleep below;
> The rose in the bitter wind
> Waveth above thee,
> And though fate were unkind,
> O sweet what boots it,
> Since all men love thee?

Apart from an obvious musical relationship, however, Miss Pitter's work falls within Spenser's definition of poetry and the poet, which logically concluded an argument first aired with Petrarch's rather tentative use of his native tongue and culminating in Spenser's becoming champion of his own language as against the claims of Latin and Greek, but at the same time a poet as the ancients understood the word. He insisted, that is, on the whole duty of the poet as a teacher; first of the virtuous life; and secondly of the beauties of his own tongue by experiment in accepted metres, and by experiment in the use of words, by the elevation of the vernacular into a poetic language, distinct from and impossible to prose. There are today other definitions of poetry and the nature of poetical language as true and as truly worked out as Spenser's; but Spenser's has a permanent value; and because Miss Pitter makes the same demands upon herself as a poet and upon the language of poetry (her use of the archaism in particular is comparable to Spenser's use of Chaucer) and because she is neither imitative nor reactionary, but entirely original, she occupies a special place in contemporary poetry. One example must suffice:

> Or like the lamb, new when the windy tops
> Of all the trees bemoan the tardy year,
> When threadbare leaves are blown among the copse
> And only the careful herd thinks primavere;
> So is my soul sore doubtful of her power,
> And feels not in her coldness how the rare
> Rathe tenderness of April hour by hour
> Breathes benedicite more on the air;
> But when she knows the sharp breath of the east
> Full piteous plainings wake her unwarmed breast.

This is experimental verse, in the special sense that it is trying to achieve its effect by the use of strange and sometimes uncouth words; but it is successful experiment, like a great deal of Elizabethan literature. This does not mean that Miss Pitter's achievement is in any way as great as Spenser's or Sidney's or Daniel's, but it does mean that she is a voice crying in the wilderness, for never was British poetry in such need of experiment, of constructive experiment, of experiment by a skilled poet, as it is today. Her work is worth careful study; and those who might be interested in one of the most distinguished and most conscious and least acknowledged of English women poets should buy this book and see for themselves.

GEORGE DANGERFIELD

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PRELUDES AND SYMPHONIES *by John Gould Fletcher* (MACMILLAN. $1.75)

MR. FLETCHER has reissued, under a new title, his early collections of *vers libre, Irradiations; Land and Spray* (1915), and *Goblins and Pagodas* (1916). The slim, mild green paper-covered volumes which appeared at the first flush of the "new poetry" have doubtless long been out of print. Characteristic works of the Age of Amy Lowell (to whom the present reissue is dedicated), these poetic suites are perhaps as well its most triumphant: within their self-imposed limitations of form and subject, they achieve a genuine if fragile beauty closely correspondent to the paintings of Monet and to the Impressionists or to the tone-poems of Debussy.

New to the collection is an intelligent preface, historical and critical, by Mr. Fletcher. He confesses that, "in the opinion of some discerning critics, he has never equalled the poetry contained in its pages", written fourteen years ago; and admits to finding, as he rereads *Irradiations*, "a certain freshness of phraseology that at the present day I have to labor hard to recapture—if indeed I can entirely recapture it".

The author obligingly obviates the labors of the *Quellenforscher* by a frank statement of his "sources" and "influences". He had read, by 1913, none of the Imagists (not then collected into an anthology) save Ezra Pound. "During the course of the month in which I was to finish *Irradiations*, I was to make his acquaintance. My gods proved to be different from his: I depended on Whitman, Blake, Shelley, and the French Symbolists. . . . In *Irradiations* my dependence upon the Symbolists is particularly marked. . . . [He cites as particular source *Les Fêtes quotidiennes* by Guy Charles Cros]. There are also echoes of Verhaeren strewn up and down these pages."

The closing paragraphs voice the return in Fletcher's work from imagism, with its rejection of all but "pure" (non-cerebral) poetry, to the older tradition which allowed of "thought" as well as "feeling". Of his later poems, Fletcher says: "I have been at pains to give them a more philosophic structure, and not merely sought to follow my mood wherever it led. That may be because the domain of the subconscious, with which these poems deal, is too readily exhausted". (This is scarcely true; but a purely "imagistic" exploration proves, ere long, a weariness to the flesh.)

Fletcher divides poetry *in partes tres*; the "main branch, the branch that is pure folk-song"—Homer, Chaucer, Burns, Heine; the kind "that presupposes a steadily held philosophic background"—Lucretius, Dante, Goethe, Blake, Hardy; and a third, which exists merely for the sake of its beauty—"pure" poetry, that is. The Imagists for one sort, the "musical" poets for another. As Fletcher admits, these early poems of his (like all "pure" poetry) "have all in common a certain aloofness to life". This aloofness to life, Imagism, by definition, substantially required: in the life of normal man, even the normal poet, sense impressions are never wholly abstracted from intellectual conceptions, ideas. A world in which there are no *meanings*—or what amounts to the same thing, in which sense impressions are their own unaided *meaning*—bears little resemblance to our everyday world.

The "Symphonies" in color, beautiful specimens of the *confusion des genres*, are not a "criticism of life"—indeed have nothing whatever to do with "life" in Arnold's sense, the sort of life that needs interpretation. They do not interpret, they present; and their subjects are not the actions and passions of men but the natural world seen through the medium of esthetic sensibility and mood.

But why rack a butterfly on the Aristotelian wheel? Mr. Fletcher has defined his objectives, and with a rare and sure self-criticism "placed" his early work, "Admirable in kind": there's no assailing that.

AUSTIN WARREN

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A VARIED SHELF

THE GREAT CRUSADE AND AFTER
by Preston William Slosson (MACMILLAN $5.00)

As A PIECE of historical writing about America since 1914, Professor Slosson's book has certain very commendable differences from the volume of self-conscious and contemporary observations about the United States.

The book is primarily a history, almost a text-book; for it is written with detachment, it is carefully documented, it is organized in a conventional manner. But it also has the virtue of being written with considerable force and gusto and, in places, with downright humor. Despite its objective character and studied use of the past tense, the treatment shows repeatedly that the author is not altogether detached. Instead, he is watching the parade of certain inanities which amuse him; he lets slip many times those little observations which are seldom to be found in history books.

Another of the virtues of Professor Slosson's treatment of the American scene is the comprehensive way in which he has dealt with his facts. It is all here, America of the war, adjustment, disillusion, mechanical triumphs, social hubbub, and vigorous activity. But the style saves it from being just another recital of American vices and virtues. Especially to be commended is Professor Slosson's strikingly adequate discussion of prohibition, the scandals of the Harding administration, and the rise of the cult of nationalism most extravagantly represented in the Ku Klux Klan. In these pages he has given as fair and just an outlay of facts as we have yet seen in print. And even if the entire book is noticeably weakened by its excess of statistical information, this characteristic is in itself typical of our age. This picture of contemporary America is something of a crazy quilt. Mixed with a sense of solid practicality there is a large amount of stupidity and childishness. None of it has escaped Professor Slosson's examination. He sees the development of the machine and the growth of leisure; and he also sees that leisure spent in pursuit of silly games, mawkish entertainment, and pseudo-learning. Out of the polyglot civilization which Charles Beard watched "rise", the present author has lifted the contemporary signposts; namely, prohibition, equality for women, the automobile, nationalism, industrialized science, and advertising.

Probably the most interesting section of the book is the last chapter, in which Professor Slosson attempts to characterize the American mind. The result is not successful, for we are all too close to ourselves to see anything distinctive about our mental cast; but here is the picture of a restless, vigorous, unesthetic, striving and raw people. The American is not a Rotarian, a materialist, a Greenwich Village esthete, nor a humanitarian. He is all of these and he is none of them. And that is the paradoxical thing about this book: it gives no coherent portrait of the American. We doubt that it can be done.

Generally speaking, *The Great Crusade and After* is a readable and informing book. It is by no means the final word on the subject, but it is a summary which, even if written in an historical style, is valuable. And by no means of least value is the added critical essay on authorities used in the preparation of the volume. Here is a sane and judicial presentation of books and articles on America—an ideal bibliography.

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THE STORY OF PUNISHMENT *by Harry Elmer Barnes* (STRATFORD. $3.00)

As EVERYONE knows, Professor Barnes is a sociologist, an opponent of institutionalized Christianity, an arch-modernist, and a prolific writer. He is, moreover, known as a liberal and a humanitarian; and in his present book he has shown practically all the virtues and vices attaching to his qualifications.

This volume is a study of the various devices used by modern man in punishing the criminal. With Professor Barnes's treatment it becomes a recital of horror, injustice, inhumanity and terror. The toughest mind shrinks before such an account of the frightful suffering to which human beings have been subjected because of their anti-social acts. But the author is not writing an objective account of punishment. His motive ultimately is the discarding of punishment as a means of social revenge or as a deterrent to crime and the substitution of psychiatric treatment as a method of curing the criminal.

The center of the book lies in what we believe is a monstrous fallacy, peculiar to sociologists and humanitarians, contained in the concept that free will is a delusion, and that "there is not the slightest iota of choice allowed to any individual from birth to the grave". Once you grant that man is not a free moral agent, then the cause for his personal and social derelictions will lie either in his heredity or in his environment or in both. This is precisely what Professor Barnes believes and this is the reason for his naïve acceptance of psychiatry, "dynamic psychology", and negative eugenics as solutions for crime. No wonder he is shocked at the severity of criminal punishment. The theory of punishment, whether as a deterrent or as social revenge or as human justice, is postulated on the belief that man is to a large extent responsible for his evil acts and his good acts. Socio-legal punishment is an attempt to administer justice for the violation of certain laws found in the wisdom of the race to be good. If that justice works a hardship on some men, then obviously reform is needed. But the theory of it remains sound—so long as free will is accepted as a reality.

To make an analogy of anti-social behavior and of disease is the veriest nonsense; and Professor Barnes is indulging himself in an error in first principles when he ignores the difference between ethical concepts and muscular tissue. Like other materialists, he has got rid of everything the microscope does not disclose and has embraced the theory of natural determinism as if it were the beginning and end of all wisdom.

To impress on people their lack of responsibility for personal behavior is to preach social chaos. Punishment for crime manifestly needs reformation, and improved prison conditions are desired by all intelligent men; but such an attack on the principle of justice as Professor Barnes has written here is little short of absurd. One might just as well say that the writing of his book and the postulation of its errors were determined by Professor Barnes's heredity and environment and that his will had nothing to do with its existence. Obviously such a notion is ridiculous.

Such theory as Professor Barnes teaches here and elsewhere is of course opposed to all belief in free will; but experience remains impregnably fixed in its favor. Like many humanitarians, Professor Barnes is suffering from a kind of mental color-blindness—an inability to see values which his five senses do not discern.

ALAN BURTON CLARKE

SPAIN *by Salvador de Madariaga* (SCRIBNER'S. $5.00)

THERE is no one more fitted to write on modern Spain than Don Salvador de Madariaga. For to the insight and sympathy which we would expect of a writer describing his own country, qualifications especially necessary for any work on Spain, there is

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added in his case an international point of view which assures us that his treatment of his subject will at the same time be fair and candid. If there are occasional instances in this brilliant study of the apologetic note, they are consequently far outweighed by its penetrating criticism and its frank acknowledgment of faults in the Spanish character which are in part at least responsible for Spain's present position as compared with its glorious past.

Under the headings "Land, People and History", "School and Larder" and "The Elements of the Reign of Alfonso XIII", the author provides an all-inclusive background for his subsequent chapters on conditions as they are today. The history of the nineteenth century—and what is past of the twentieth—is the history of the endeavor of the Spanish people, we are told, to erect new institutions on the ruins of the old. And this, in the opinion of Señor de Madariaga, has been thwarted by a succession of monarchs unfitted for the discharge of their duties, by the division of the intellectual classes into two irreconcilable camps, and by the dispersive tendencies inherent in the character of the people and even in the soil of the country. A great deal of emphasis is placed upon the intense individualism of the Spaniard and that instinct to incarnate abstract political ideas as well as institutions which has led him to symbolize the monarch as the nation and therefore insist that such powers and attributes as were granted to him belonged not to the man but to the king. Through such interpretations much of what seems paradoxical in Spanish life may be explained, and it is in these aspects of his writing that the author makes his greatest contribution to our understanding of his country.

We doubt if any contemporary writer other than Señor de Madariaga could have given within so brief a compass such a vivid, readable, and, in the broadest sense, informative account of Spain and of the forces which direct its national life.

THE INNER HISTORY OF THE CHINESE REVOLUTION *by T'ang Leang-li* (DUTTON. $5.00)

THIS careful and detailed study of the Chinese revolution is without question one of the best books on the subject which have appeared in this country. It is written by a Chinese whose position as representative in Great Britain of the Central Executive Committee of the Kuo-Min Tang has brought him in contact with the leaders of the revolution and given him access to documents which no foreign historian could hope to see. The result is a wealth of material on internal developments within the councils of the Kuo-Min Tang which goes far toward explaining the tortuous course of the revolution since the days when Sun Yat-Sen first began preaching his message of revolt.

It is of course necessary to understand where T'ang Leang-li himself stands in regard to the revolution in order to weigh the evidence which he brings to bear upon disputed points or upon the character of the revolution's leaders. In his introduction he declares that as a "revolutionary who is intensely interested in the realization of the ideals and principles of the Chinese Revolution, as interpreted by Sun Yat-Sen", he can make no claim to being an impartial historian. This frank avowal of his sympathies must be borne in mind, but nevertheless the author has succeeded in giving a far more accurate and realistic picture of the events he describes than many foreign historians professing an attitude of absolute impartiality.

The most valuable portion of his book deals with the background of the revolution, its origin and historical significance, the influence of the secret societies from which it sprang, the long period of education marked by Sun Yat-Sen's early propaganda, and the effect of the impact upon China of Western industrialism. Another particularly interesting chapter is that which deals with the reorganization of the Kuo-Min Tang in 1924

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and the Russian orientation. In its final pages we naturally come upon highly controversial grounds. The author is a bitter critic of Chiang K'ai-Shih (Chiang Kai-shek) whom he accuses, in an interesting parallel, of betraying the revolution much as did Yuan Shih-K'ai. His overthrow he believes is imminent, for "the Left, conscious of its revolutionary mission, will never accept defeat". In the immediate prospects of China he consequently finds no reason for "undue optimism", but like every revolutionary he is confident of the ultimate success of his cause. For the general reader the book is perhaps too detailed and confusing through its introduction of so many personalities; for the student of Chinese politics it is invaluable.

FOSTER RHEA DULLES

BUILDERS OF THE BAY COLONY *by Samuel Eliot Morison* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $5.00)

Most of the recent volumes dealing with early Massachusetts are likely to prove as transitory as the tercentenary pageants, but while Mr. Morison puts pen to paper the writing of history will never be a lost art. The understanding which his book reveals has not been acquired through a few months of intensive research. He knows this life of early Massachusetts as a certain few writers know the conditions of present day life. The result is that his *Builders of the Bay Colony*, the chapters of which were first given before the Lowell Institute in honor of the approaching tercentenary of Massachusetts, possesses a depth of insight.

Great enterprises seldom spring from a single motive. Several thousand Englishmen did set out to establish a Puritan Commonwealth in New England. It is also true that Hakluyt and a few other Englishmen had been seeking to arouse their countrymen to a colonizing zeal such as gave Spain and France great colonial possessions in the new world. The Reverend John White had seen the possibilities in the codfish industry which for so long was to bring prosperity to the colony, and had tried to establish Roger Conant and his fishermen at Gloucester. Conditions in England fostered grave fears for the future. Work was hard to secure, and the obvious remedy lay across the sea in a land of great natural resources. "Puritan" did not mean what it means today, but there was menace in the word for all that. Mr. Morison reveals how the swiftness with which thousands flocked to the Bay Colony, so that not Boston alone but many of the surrounding cities and towns were founded within a very few years, arose from a combination of causes. In an earlier day Columbus had proved a golden-tongued orator; now Captain John Smith had shown himself a successful if not strictly veracious salesman.

Mr. Morison's account of this unique venture is well-rounded because he selects the subjects for his gallery of portraits from many phases of the life of the Bay Colony. As these figures rise before us, Captain John Smith, Reverend John White, the two Winthrops, Thomas Shepard, Nathaniel Ward, Anne Bradstreet, Robert Child, Henry Dunster, John Eliot, we understand how a strong state sprung into existence in the brief years in which most colonies struggle for bare existence.

DOROTHEA LAWRANCE MANN

THE OLD CHINA TRADE *by Foster Rhea Dulles* (HOUGHTON MIFFLIN. $4.00)

THE SANTA FE TRAIL *by Robert Luther Duffus* (LONGMANS, GREEN. $5.00)

In the course of our devious reading we have come upon two books which we enthusiastically nominate to honorable places on the shelves devoted to Americana. Singly they present, one—a stirring picture of our early merchant marine in the Pacific, and the other—a story of the first of the hazardous trails which connected the American East and West. Together they constitute an

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important and excitatious addition to the history of the march of empire and the conquest of trade which have, so to speak, put us more than slightly on the map.

Mr. Dulles in his *The Old China Trade* offers a work of some magnitude. He gives us the thoroughly documented story of the confusion in which the merchant seamen of the young republic found themselves immediately after the signing of the treaty which marked England's acceptance of American independence; of how, to solve the problem of opening new trade routes, they drove their absurdly small ships, manned by absurdly young crews, around the Cape of Good Hope and later around the Horn, and continued, until 1844, with the utmost courage and audacity, to build up our enormously rich commerce with China. After that date, treaties with the Flowery Kingdom gave our Oriental trade the benefit of diplomatic relations and ushered in a new era—with which Mr. Dulles does not concern himself. Very wisely he has confined his research and his narrative within a certain, and always fascinating, period, with the result that here we have not only a record which will be of priceless assistance to the student and an inspiration to the writer of adventure fiction, but the casual reader will be entranced by the amazing true tale which Mr. Dulles tells, the sheer romance of the thing—preposterous, unbelievable.

Aside from its more serious intent as an authentic slice of American maritime history and the clarity of its style, the book imparts the odor of sandalwood and tea and spices, and the tang of those high, bright winds which must naturally blow around so good a tale of the sea.

In *The Santa Fe Trail* Mr. Duffus has produced a saga of moving life and color which must have caused him some pains to hold always within bounds. Tracing the record of the men who followed the first faint paths across prairie and desert, the facts, flaming with import and glamour, almost run away with themselves. Yet Mr. Duffus plays no pranks with history. From the sixteenth-century Conquistadors who wound their long way up from the Caribbean, and the French and later the American traders and wanderers—restless souls, hungry for land, seeking gold and avid for the stark, desperate adventure of facing the unknown miles and dangers that lay between the eastern states and the old Spanish town of Santa Fe lying drowsy and seductive under the southern sun—down to the laying of those iron and steel trails which annihilated one brand of life and enterprise only to institute another equally infused with vitality, the author of this enthralling record presents at once an historical document and a panorama filled with men, women and events—exciting, significant and unforgettable.

Mr. Duffus writes with an unerring sense of both the national and the human drama, and he employs a fine balance between such imagery as fills his literary chinks and the facts upon which he builds his book.

ARISTOPHANES' LYSISTRATA *A New Version by Gilbert Seldes* (FARRAR & RINEHART. $2.00)

THIS modernized edition in "a language suitable to our own time", of Aristophanes' comedy-masterpiece has, since its gorgeously pictorial presentation on both the Philadelphia and the New York stage, called forth a hurricane of gusty and ribald laughter and an equal amount of shocked criticism.

Just offhand, we would venture to say that it is a trifle late to criticize *Lysistrata* per se, realizing that the dramatic critics of 411 B.C. probably used up a good many wax tablets and parchment scrolls trying to decide whether this uproarious piece of political satire—in which the patriotic women of Greece deny themselves to their husbands until the latter shall agree to put an end to the war—was worth-while propaganda for a lasting world peace or just another bit of phos-

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phorescent mud from the Athenian Great White Way. In either case, or both, it really doesn't seem as though anyone could do anything about it now except to join in the man-sized mirth of the thing, and to compliment Mr. Seldes upon the unawed and robust use to which he has put his classical education.

LYNN ANDERSON

ROADSIDE MEETINGS *by Hamlin Garland* (MACMILLAN. $3.50)

NUMBERS of these "meetings" have appeared in THE BOOKMAN, whose readers will welcome the volume with its additions. Mr. Garland saw the twilight of many gods: Oliver Wendell Holmes, James Russell Lowell, Edward Everett Hale, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, of the elder age; Edwin Booth, unduplicated on the stage; William Dean Howells, Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll, James A. Hearne, John Hay, Eugene Field, F. Hopkinson Smith, Will Carleton, Thomas Nelson Page, George W. Cable, Edgar W. (Bill) Nye, Walt Whitman, "old and poor" at Camden; John Burroughs, James Whitcomb Riley, Bret Harte, Stephen Crane, Joaquin Miller, Henry B. Fuller, Henry George, Edward MacDowell, Theodore Roosevelt, Richard Watson Gilder, S. S. McClure and many another of lesser note. These were in the main casual contacts, each of which left something worth remembering behind. Furthermore there are personal chapters of interest to those who would travel vicariously the dusty road of letters. May I presume to say that he met Stephen Crane at the "Sign of the Lanthorn Club", not "Lantern" and that it was located in William, not "Williams" Street?

DON C. SEITZ

OCEAN PARADE *by Fritjoff Michelson and Leon Byrne* (MCBRIDE. $3.00)

HERE is a rough-and-tumble true yarn of the sea, sailors, and ports that batters its way to the front rank of books for those who like their adventure raw. Two San Francisco reporters left unfinished copy in their typewriters and set out to see the Orient from the rusty fo'c'sle of the freight ship *West Wanderer*. They have come back with a first-hand tale of sailors and Eastern "sailortowns" destined to curl the hair of first-cabin tourists.

Decks slippery with vodka, Three Star Hennessey and the blood of Gargantuan brawls; run-ins with Japanese policemen; a fo'c'sle full of Chinese girls in Shanghai; hours trapped in a Buddhist temple; the rescue of a wrecked junk and its starving crew—these are just skimmed from a welter of deep-drinking, hard-fighting, loud-laughing adventures.

Once in a while the authors may be suspected of stretching a point to make a good story better, but they never sentimentalize. A freighter is a rough place; Oriental waterfronts are rougher, and the picture they make could never be called a pretty one. But it is full of gusto—the kind of reading that makes one's pulses thump. The sailors of the *West Wanderer* are a crew worth knowing: Vodka Charlie, Frank the Bruiser, Stewart the Squealer, Thor, the hard-case Swedish mate who had it in for "those educated guys". Their names may sound like fiction but the men are the real thing. One would look a long while to find a better picture than this of the miscalled "wooden men" who man the iron ships.

WILLIAM HOWELL WELLS

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THE BOOKMAN'S MONTHLY SCORE

COMPILED BY FRANK PARKER STOCKBRIDGE, LIFE MEMBER OF THE AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION, IN COÖPERATION WITH THE PUBLIC LIBRARIES OF AMERICA

Only one new title in this month's Score. That may reflect merely the late Summer inactivity of publishers and the fact that library borrowers are mostly on vacation as this is compiled, or it may have a deeper significance. One cannot help wondering how the new fifty-cent cigar-store books and the rivalry of publishers in dollar editions are going to affect not merely the buying and selling of books but the circulation of new books in the public libraries. Your reporter's guess is that the more expensive and important books will not be affected one way or the other, and that probably the only appreciable difference it will make to library readers may be a slackening of the demand for the lighter fiction.

—F. P. S.

NOVELS

1.	CIMARRON	*Edna Ferber*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
2.	EXILE	*Warwick Deeping*	KNOPF
3.	LAUGHING BOY	*Oliver La Farge*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
4.	ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT	*Erich Maria Remarque*	LITTLE, BROWN
5.	THE WOMAN OF ANDROS	*Thornton Wilder*	BONI
6.	THE DOOR	*Mary Roberts Rinehart*	FARRAR & RINEHART
7.	ROGUE HERRIES	*Hugh Walpole*	DOUBLEDAY, DORAN
8.	THE GREAT MEADOW	*Elizabeth Madox Roberts*	VIKING
9.	THE SCARAB MURDER CASE	*S. S. Van Dine*	SCRIBNER'S
10.	CORONET	*Manuel Komroff*	COWARD-MCCANN
11.	YOUNG MAN OF MANHATTAN	*Katharine Brush*	FARRAR & RINEHART
12.	A LANTERN IN HER HAND	*Bess Streeter Aldrich*	APPLETON

GENERAL

1.	BYRON	*André Maurois*	APPLETON
2.	THE GREEN PASTURES	*Marc Connelly*	FARRAR & RINEHART
3.	NEW WORLDS TO CONQUER	*Richard Halliburton*	BOBBS-MERRILL
4.	THE HUMAN MIND	*Karl Menninger*	KNOPF
5.	THE ART OF THINKING	*Ernest Dimnet*	SIMON & SCHUSTER
6.	GRANDMOTHER BROWN'S HUNDRED YEARS	*Harriet Connor Brown*	LITTLE, BROWN
7.	A PREFACE TO MORALS	*Walter Lippmann*	MACMILLAN
8.	HENRY THE EIGHTH	*Francis Hackett*	LIVERIGHT
9.	MRS. EDDY	*Edwin Franden Dakin*	SCRIBNER'S
10.	THE TRAGIC ERA	*Claude G. Bowers*	HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
11.	ESCAPE*	*Francesco Nitti*	PUTNAM
12.	TREATISE ON THE GODS	*H. L. Mencken*	KNOPF

* *This title has not previously appeared in the Monthly Score*

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